

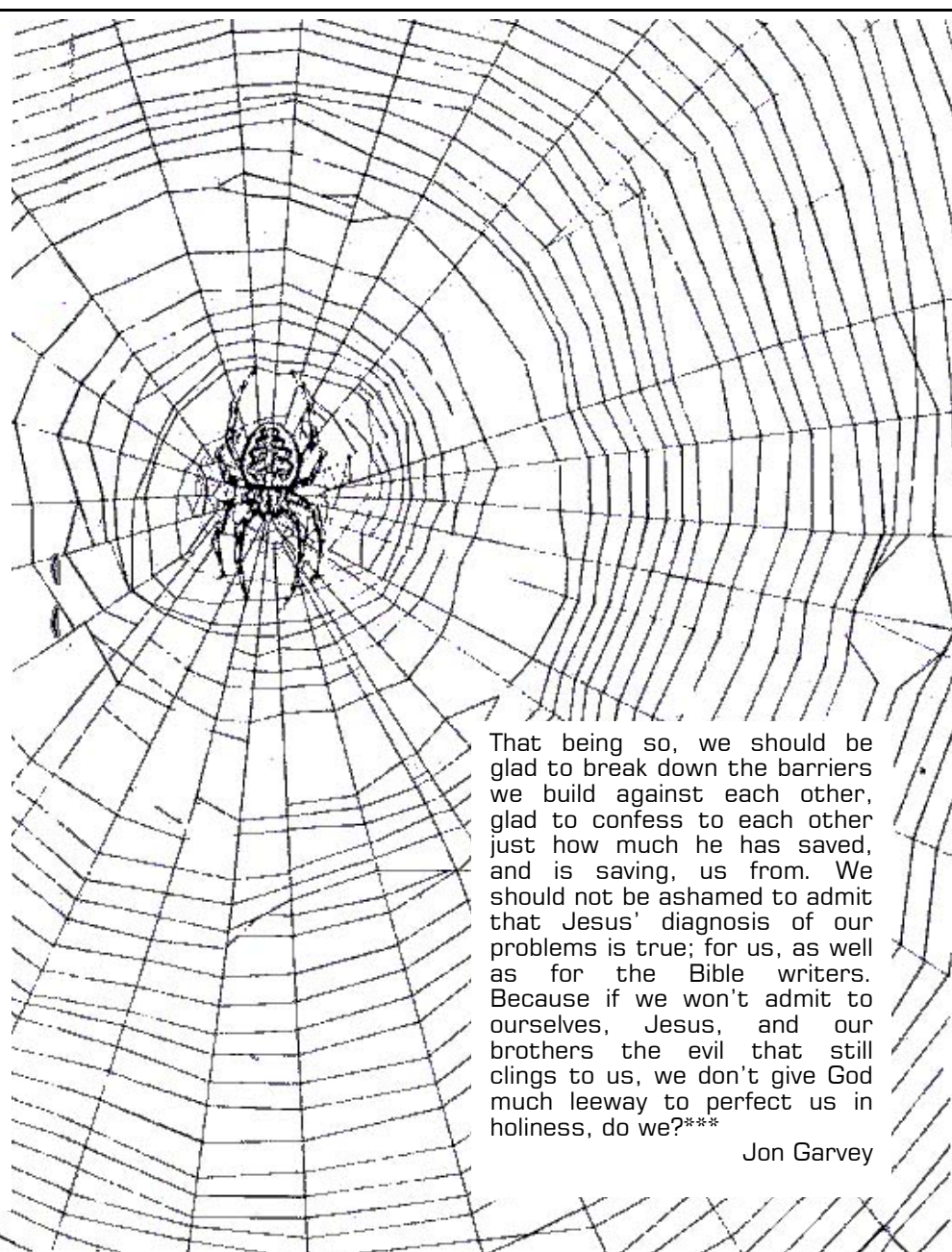
THE REAL ME, THE REAL YOU

Think of the most saintly christian you know. Is it St Paul? John Wesley? Mrs Thingy who sits on the left in church? Billy Graham maybe? Or even C H Spurgeon?

What do all their lives have in common? Well, several things, actually, but I have in mind one in particular. They are all adulterers, fornicators, murderers, thieves and blasphemers. And other things besides. What! Have I finally taken leave of my senses? Have I been reading the News of the World? No. Then how dare I say such things? Simply because the Word of God tells us they are true. Jesus told us about the human heart in Mark ch7 vv20-23, and he had certainly read Jeremiah ch17 v9, where God says that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Paul confirms this view of the human heart, which is, as he puts it in Gal.ch5 vl 9-21, "of the flesh", and bewails the continued hold it has on his life, his thoughts and his actions in Romans ch7.

I say this so that if you should happen to find out something unpleasant about the real me you will not be surprised or shocked, as I should pray not to be surprised or shocked at finding out about the real you. Neither of us is in a position to judge each other. In fact, I will tell you a secret. Inside each of us is a rather ugly, nasty person who is afraid that other people will find out what he or she is really like. That's why we build barriers around ourselves - shyness, heartiness, intellectualism - even apparent holiness. These fool everyone, except ourselves. And we ourselves feel wretched because all the other people in church seem so much better than we are. But it isn't so - it's just that their defences are working. Some of us, if we chance to hear about some previously hidden evil in someone we know, react with shock and judgement. Woe to us, for we have hidden from ourselves the corruption in our heart. What hope is there?

There is one person who does see past our defences - even when we manage to fool ourselves - to the true depths of unpleasantness, hypocrisy and failure in us. Yet Jesus, knowing all this, became a slave to us, a mere worm, to quote the psalm, and laid down his life to heal that very rottenness.



That being so, we should be glad to break down the barriers we build against each other, glad to confess to each other just how much he has saved, and is saving, us from. We should not be ashamed to admit that Jesus' diagnosis of our problems is true; for us, as well as for the Bible writers. Because if we won't admit to ourselves, Jesus, and our brothers the evil that still clings to us, we don't give God much leeway to perfect us in holiness, do we?\*\*\*

Jon Garvey