

## Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

*“Gradually, it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through state,,nor between classes, but right through every human heart – through all human hearts.”*

Alexander Solzhenitsyn

Two weeks ago, I reread Robert L. Stevenson's literary masterpiece of how the honored Dr. Henry Jekyll discovered a potion by which he could transform himself into a different individual who could freely indulge in all manner of evil – under the name of Edward Hyde. The doctor rejoiced in his discovery, so when the passions of lust and indulgence seized him, he transformed himself into Mr. Hyde, and when he had his fill of depraved behavior, took a counteracting drug and was changed back into the kind, philanthropic doctor.

But evil has a way of ruining good. While his conscience slept, his secret partaking of forbidden fruit, led to a profound duplicity of life. Several times, without the powerful potion, he slipped into the baser character, and as the power of evil grew stronger, it became much harder to return to Dr. Jekyll. He makes promises, “I swear to God I'm done with Hyde. He will never be heard of again.” But he was helpless to reverse the process so that in the end Edward Hyde's nature became dominant and Dr. Henry Jekyll ceased to exist.

This gruesome tale is true to the facts of human nature. No one can live a double life for long. Evil powers, reinforced by appetite that has been satisfied, become strong, tyrannical, and when dismissed refuse to leave.

For over a century people have been fascinated by this story showing the duality of good and evil. Written before Sigmund Freud's naming of the ego-and the id, Stevenson's novel demonstrates a remarkable discernment of the personality's inner war. It might even explain some of the causes behind the recent violent crimes, here in Nova Scotia.

Some of my readers might recall that 1800 years before Jekyll and Hyde; a proud Pharisee described his own inner warfare in these words: “I don't understand myself at all, I really want to do what is right, but I cannot... When I try to do good, evil is right there with me” (Romans 7:18,21).

But Paul had a great advantage over Dr. Jekyll. He met the risen Christ and his life was transformed from the inside out. Later, in humility, he was able to affirm, “For the power of the life-giving spirit has freed me from the vicious circle of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

As a sinner rescued by the grace of God, I too can identify with the experience of Paul. On my own I cry, “Who will free me from my slavery to this deadly lower nature?” But, by the grace of God I am able to affirm with Paul, “*Thank God! It has been done by Jesus Christ our Lord. He has set me free.*” (Romans 7:24,25) TLB