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Chapter 25 – Man: His Creation-Part 3

I. THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN

Let me just begin by remarking that this area of study is very difficult. There are four basic reasons for this. *First*, there are many facets involved; (e.g. body, soul, spirit, heart, mind, will, conscience, flesh, etc...). *Second*, the functions attributed to these facets often overlap. For example, both the soul and the spirit can be troubled (cf John 12:27 with 13:21). However, in other contexts the soul and spirit are distinguished (e.g. 1 Thess 5:23). This overlap of function in some contexts and distinctions in others make this one of the most difficult areas of study. *Third*, when man fell he acquired a new characteristic known as the sin nature. *Fourth*, when an individual man is born again (i.e. regenerated) he acquires a new nature made in Christ's likeness. These four basic reasons make a biblical anthropology very difficult to systematize. Quite frankly, to my knowledge it has never been done to the satisfaction of a large majority. There are many different views of man's constitution. The least we can say is that man is a very complicated being.

A. Man's Psychological Constitution

1. Dichotomy

Dichotomy is the theory that man is composed of two distinct elements; body and soul. This theory rests on the identification of spirit and soul. The Western Church held to dichotomy. The spirit and soul are understood as one substance with each having distinct functions (Strong, Hodge, Berkhof). The spirit is the rational and contemplates God, the soul is the animate and in tune with the senses directed earthward. Dichotomy has been the predominant view in church history.

2. Trichotomy

Trichotomy is the theory that man is composed of three distinct elements; body, soul, and spirit. The Eastern Church held to trichotomy. “The body is the material part of our constitution, the soul is the principle of animal life, and the spirit is the principle of our rational life.” (Shedd) This view rests on the strict distinction of spirit and soul. Support for trichotomy comes from Heb 4:12 and 1 Thess 5:23. However, some passages picture man as just one part; soul (James 5:20). Others picture man as various combinations of four parts; heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30) or soul, spirit, joints, and marrow (Heb 4:12). Still others picture man as various combinations of three parts; heart, soul, and mind (Matt 22:37) or body, soul, and spirit (1 Thess 5:23). In conclusion, none of these passages have as their purpose to give man’s composition. Rather, all of them emphasize the totality of man’s being.

3. Modified Trichotomy

The theory that man is composed of a body and spirit that result in a soul. The Genesis text indicates this

Genesis 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground [body], and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life [spirit]; and man became a living being [*nephesh* – soul].

Formula of human life...



My conception of this original creative act is that the material body and the immaterial spirit when put together result in or become a living soul. A faint analogy to this is the science of metallurgy where different metals are heated into liquid form, mixed together and allowed to cool. Once combined they are no longer two metals but a single metal, known as an alloy. In the same way, when a human body is given a human spirit the result is a living soul. As Ryrie said, “Material and immaterial combined to produce a single entity.” So, the Bible never loses sight of the unity of man. Interestingly, the Bible describes the opposite taking place at physical death.

James 2:26 the body without *the* spirit is dead

Formula of human death...

body – spirit = physical death

Thus, human death occurs when the body and spirit are separated (also cf Gen. 25:8, 17; 35:29; 49:33). This would be a modified trichotomous view because there are three components; body, spirit, and soul but they are not totally independent entities having totally distinct functions. The soul is the result of body combining with spirit and this combination results in new abilities that neither body nor spirit are capable of alone (a synergistic combination). Yet some of the functions of the soul overlap with functions of both the body (Ps 42:1-2; 63:1; 68:10) and spirit.

II. The Image of God (Heb 10:5; 1:3; Col 2:9; John 14:9)

The body, spirit, and resultant soul are all made in God's image. However, this is not to say that God has a body, a fundamental flaw of Mormonism. Ryrie said, "...just because man, created in the image of God, has a body, does not necessitate attributing a body to God. But obviously man was created a total being, material and immaterial, and that total being was created in the image of God. Therefore, (1) man's body is included in the image of God.ⁱ Nevertheless, many Christians, seeking to avoid idolatry, have insisted that only the soul and/or spirit of man are made in the image of God. But this doesn't seem to align with Scripture. Man must in his total being reflect the image of God. "...the view that this image has nothing to do with the body is profoundly erroneous...because it implies that God, in the Creation, failed to harmonize the form of the body with these faculties...If the form of the human body derives from any other source except divine faculties, then we might as well say that human form derives from purely casual causes, unrelated to the ideal mind of God. Darwinism is the logical result, namely, that God caused the animal and human forms to occur...without regard to any dimension of His own essence" (Pilkey). "This is not just a neat philosophical point. It has directly to do with the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ" (Clough).

Colossians 2:9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,

"Imagine God wholly employed and absorbed in it—with his hand, his eye, his labor, his purpose, his wisdom, his providence, and above all, his love which was dictating the lineaments of this creature...Whatever was the form and expression which was then given

to the clay by the creator, Christ was in his thoughts as one day to become Man, because the Word, too, was to be both clay and flesh..." (Tertullian).ⁱⁱ

A. Man's Physical Constitutionⁱⁱⁱ

Man's physical constitution in the widest sense is known as the "body" (Gk = *soma*) composed of various organs; skin, liver, heart, lungs, brain, eyes, hair, blood, etc... The body is that which man needs to interact with the physical creation. The "body" is sometimes referred to as "flesh" (Col 2:1, 5). While sometimes the "flesh" is used to refer to the physical body of Christ (1 Tim 3:16; 1 Pt 3:18) it is also used of the "sin nature" (Rom 7:18, 25). Paul says "I am fleshly" (Rom. 7:14) referring not merely to body but to his sin nature and likewise "nothing good dwells in me", that is [in my flesh] (Rom. 7:18). Thus, "body" and "flesh" are sometimes synonyms but not always. Context determines usage.

B. Man's Moral Constitution

The moral facets of man are more complex. These should not be thought of as parts but as facets, as facets of a diamond (Ryrie). They are each essential to the whole being.

1. Soul (Heb = *nephesh*; Gk = *psuche*)

The soul is the *result* of the body uniting with the spirit (Gen. 2:7). It is the very life of breathing kinds, namely humans and animals, both land (Gen. 1:24) and sea (Gen. 1:21) but not plants. It is the inner part of man which departs at death (Gen. 35:18) and returns life (1 Kings 17:21) even though the body of a dead person is sometimes called a "soul" (Lev 21:1-3; Num 6:6; 9:6). It is the seat of emotions and passions (Ps 35:9, 12; Eccl 6:9) and volition (Job 7:15). It also engages in mental activity (Ps 139:14).

Unbelievers are called soulish men and they do not receive or understand the things of God (1 Cor 2:14). Soulish men interact on a horizontal plane with men and nature. However, when a person believes and is regenerated he can be spiritual or carnal. The spiritual believer judges all things according to Scripture (1 Cor 2:15). So, the spiritual believer is the one who engages the things of God and interacts on a vertical plane. In illustration of this, Christ gave his spirit (*pneuma*) to God the Father (John 19:30), but He gave his soul (*psuche*) for the sheep (John 10:15). In relation to the resurrection body, 1 Cor 15:44 teaches that we are sown a soulish body for this life but we are raised a spiritual body for the next life. Further, the word soul can also be used of those in the intermediate state

between physical death and resurrection (Rev 6:9). The soul is the principal focus of redemption because the whole man must be redeemed and this word best captures the whole man (Gen 2:7).

2. Spirit (Heb = *ruach*; Gk = *pneuma*)

The spirit of man is that which underwent spiritual death when Adam sinned. However, all people still have a spirit because if they did not they would be dead (Js 2:26). The spirit is not itself “life” but is *life-giving* (Gen 2:7; Job 33:1). The spirit is a gift and creation of God (Zech 12:1) and is preserved by God (Job 10:12). The spirit of man can be agitated (Gen 41:8). It is sometimes the seat of emotions (Job 7:11). Sometimes referenced as that which thinks or understands (Job 20:3; Ps 77:7). Rarely used of the will (Ps 51:12). It is the locale of morals, whether good or evil (Ps 32:2; Prov 16:18, 19) and here incorporates the NT word conscience. The spirit of man departs at physical death (Ps 104:29).

In order for the spirit to regain its original function of judging all things according to the word of God and having vertical relationship with God the human spirit must be made alive by God at regeneration. Once regenerated, a person can be either spiritual or carnal. Since “soul” refers to the basic life that all people possess Paul emphasized the spiritual. The new spiritual abilities that accompany regeneration became central to Paul. Whereas all had a soul, not all had the abilities of the regenerated human spirit.

3. Heart (Heb = *leb*; Gk = *kardia*)

Heart is the broadest term in biblical psychology. Only a very few times does it refer to the physical organ. In the OT, this term is used over 900 times and is closest in relation to the spirit (Prov. 15:13), soul (Ps. 73:21), conscience (Rom. 2:15), and mind (Heb. 8:10). It therefore includes many of the functions of the spirit, soul, conscience, and mind. Interestingly, unlike body, spirit and soul, which are ascribed to both man and animals, the “heart” is reserved for man made in God’s image.

The NT reveals that the heart is the center of man. Thus, we are commanded to love the Lord with all our “heart” (Lk. 10:27). The ISBE says, “The heart in Scripture is variously used, sometimes for the mind and understanding, sometimes for the will, sometimes for the affections, sometimes for the conscience, sometimes for the whole soul. Generally, it denotes the whole soul of man and all the faculties of it, not absolutely, but as they are all one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in our doing of good and evil.”^{iv}

4. Conscience (Gk = *suneidesis*)

There is no word in the OT for conscience but it would be included under the broad Hebrew term “heart” (*leb*). However, the NT gives new revelation regarding the conscience. The conscience is an internal witness that tells a man he ought to do what he believes to be right and not to do what he believes to be wrong. The conscience does not tell us what is right or wrong but urges us to do what we have been taught is right. The conscience always judges according to the standard it has received. Thus, the conscience is infallible only when the standard it has received conforms to the word of God.

We can do wrong in good conscience because we have been taught the wrong thing (Acts 23:1). We may violate our conscience (Rom 2:15). If we violate our conscience then the action was not done in faith and is considered “sin” (Rom 14:23). When the truth is told the conscience bears witness with the Spirit (Rom 9:1). A weak conscience is defiled but can be strengthened as the mind is renewed in knowledge and adjusts the standard by which the conscience judges (1 Cor 8:7).

5. Mind (Gk = *nous*)

The mind is the location of the reasoning processes that give and receive instruction, inform the standard by which the conscience judges and thereby influences the will to make a certain choice. The mind can be enlightened or darkened. The unbeliever’s mind has the capacity to know God through creation and conscience (Rom. 2:15), but if that individual rejects what he knows, God gives him over to a depraved mind, a darkened mind (Rom. 1:18-28; Eph. 4:17). The mind and the conscience form a close connection as both can be defiled (Titus 1:15).

The believers mind plays a central role in spiritual development. We are told that the believer is given the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16). Therefore we are able to think God’s thoughts after Him and engage in understanding and reasoning in accordance with God’s wisdom. The Spirit has been given to us to open the mind to understand truth. Because every thought is to be taken captive to Christ (2 Cor 10:3-5) the Christian is to be continually renewing his “mind” (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23). As the mind is renewed the Christian is transformed toward Christ-likeness. Thinking God’s thoughts after Him is the key to the Christian life.

The mind of the believer is contrasted with the flesh (*sarx*) in Romans 7. The mind can therefore be set on the Spirit or on the flesh. It seems to sit at the crux of serving one or the

other. Sometimes the conscience will block a good action until the mind is convinced. For example, the NT illustrates that food or drink, which may be good in and of themselves may be rejected by a person's conscience so that he cannot eat or drink in faith. If this is the case then he is to maintain good conscience (Rom 14:23). Upon further taking in of doctrine into the mind the individual may become convinced of the thing that was once rejected and may freely partake in good conscience (Rom. 14:5; 23). So, the mind is involved in receiving instruction which informs the standard by which the conscience judges.

Lastly, the church is to be united in "mind", in sound doctrine, having the same judgments on various subjects (1 Cor 1:10; Phil 1:27; 2:2).

6. Will (Gk = *thelema*)

Surprisingly, the Bible has very little to say about the will of man. Interestingly, the noun form of this word is never used of man in Scripture.^v Thus, the will is an expression of man rather than a distinct constituent or facet. Thiessen said, "Man's will is free in the sense that man can choose to do anything in keeping with his nature...man's will is not free in that he is limited to his nature...Adam could will to sin or not to sin. After the fall, man's ability to sin became inability not to sin".^{vi} Thus, if one is a sinner by nature then his choices agree with his sin nature.

The work of God the Father in drawing a person to believe in Christ is required to override the normal function of human choices (John 6:44, 45). In other words, if it were not for a special work of God no one would ever choose Christ. Once a person believes he receives a new regenerate nature which has a new disposition and desire to do the good. However, the believer still has the old sin nature as well (Rom 7). This explains why Christians can and still do sin. However, when the believer "walks by the Spirit" the fruit of the Spirit is produced through the new nature (Gal 5:16-25).

C. Transmission of the Image of God

1. The Theory of the Pre-existence of the Soul

This theory claims that our souls have existed in a previous state and enter our human bodies at some point in the early development of the body. This theory is unscriptural and was taught by Plato, Philo, and Origen. Others have held this view to explain inherited sin.

They say that man's soul must have pre-existed in a former state and actually sinned then so that there is a real sense in which his present existence is plagued by sin.

This theory has no scriptural support and is contrary to the biblical teaching of seminal imputation (Rom 5:12) and federal imputation (Rom 5:14-19) of Adam's sin to each member of the human race.

2. The Direct Creation Theory

This theory claims that the soul is an immediate creation of God and enters the body either at conception, birth, or sometime in between. This view rests on certain scriptures that claim the soul or spirit is the creation of God (Num 16:22; Eccl 12:7; Isa 57:16; Zech 12:1; Heb 12:9). Those who reject this view claim the soul and/or spirit are not immediate creations of God but mediate as the body. This theory has problems accounting for the fact that children resemble their parents in intellectual and spiritual as well as physical respects (Thiessen). This theory also attributes sin to God either directly or indirectly. Either God does this directly by creating a sinful soul or indirectly by creating a soul sinless and then by its contact with the body becomes corrupt.

3. The Traducian Theory

This theory states that the human race was immediately created in Adam, both the soul and the body and that both are propagated by natural procreation. Shedd supported this view by saying, "Individuals...are not propagated in parts, but as wholes. In Gen 1:26, 27, the man and the woman together are denominated 'man.'" He also said, "man is a species, and the idea of a species implies the propagation of the *entire* individual out of it."^{vii}

All three of these theories have difficulties. The pre-existence theory has no scriptural support but there is scriptural support for both the theory of direct creation and traducianism. However, there may not be enough revelation to finally decide the issue.

ⁱ Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 219.

ⁱⁱ We may say that the body of man is distinctly designed in order to reflect what God would look like if come in the flesh. The proof of this is Jesus Christ, God incarnate (Col 1:16; John 14:7, 9; 15:24). In agreement with this is the fact that the body of the Christian is to be used for righteousness (Rom 6:13; 12:1). Likewise is the fact that Christ did not just die for our human spirits but also for our human bodies (bread = body and cup = blood). And thus when a person believes the Scriptures teach that the human spirit is *regenerated* and the body will be *resurrected* on the basis of Christ's death. If this is the case, and it is, then man undergoes both spiritual and physical death.

ⁱⁱⁱ Spiritual death is the separation of man from God. It began when Adam personally sinned. At that point Adam's fellowship with God was broken and man was separated from God. From that point forward no one is born in fellowship with God. It should be emphasized that spiritual death is not normal. Man was created to have fellowship with God. We are all born into the world in an abnormal state, out of fellowship with God. The goal of Christ Jesus in coming into the world was to establish grounds upon which this original fellowship could be restored and men could once again enter into the normal mode of existence; intimate fellowship with God.

Physical death is the separation of the human spirit from the body. The spirit originates from God and all people have spirits (Num 16:22; Heb 12:9). It is simply not biblical to talk of man not having a spirit until he receives the Holy Spirit at salvation (cf 1 Cor 2:11; Heb 4:12; James 2:26). However, we must also add here that physical death is not normal. Man was not created to experience physical death. It is no wonder that people try to avoid funerals or even to avoid death (cf the book *The End of Aging*). No one likes to get old and lose abilities they once had. This is because death is not normal. We were not created to die. We were created to live with God forever. However, because of the sin of Adam, his body began to die and eventually did die as did all men who were born into the world (cf Gen 5; Rom 5:12). When a person dies their spirit goes to be either with God or to a place known as sheol/hades. The body returns to dust, going to sleep awaiting the day of resurrection when it is re-united with the spirit.

^{iv} ISBE Bible Dictionary, see under *Heart*.

^v Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology*.

^{vi} Henry Thiessen, *Systematic Theology*, 163.

^{vii} In Shedd's day the term 'species' was equivalent to the biblical 'kind' (cf. W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*).

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