

THE HUMAN SPIRIT

IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE TRIUNE GOD

by *John Pester*

The scope of the divine creative acts in the Bible reveals an intimate participation of the Triune God in the formation and filling of the human spirit. After the heavens were stretched forth and the foundation of the earth was laid in Genesis 1, God covered the earth with a full panoply of life—from seed-bearing herbs and trees to a vast array of animals and finally to man himself. Yet in the midst of these most majestic of activities, the Triune God, as the crowning act of His creation, seemingly placed all of His magisterial distance aside and formed the spirit of man within him by breathing the breath of life directly into his nostrils. The intimacy of this act was purposefully repeated in the New Testament on the eve of the generation of God's new creation. Following the universally momentous acts of His death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus, as the processed and consummated Triune God, once again approached man and breathed into him. In His performative declaration, "Receive the Holy Spirit," the Lord Jesus revealed the purpose of the human spirit by simultaneously filling it with the Holy Spirit as the essence of His divine breath. The breathings in Genesis 2 and John 20 reveal that the focal point of the Triune God's economical participation with man is the human spirit. Although the human spirit has been revealed, typified, and demonstrated in the Old and New Testaments, it has been superficially and almost carelessly confused with the heart and soul by many commentators of the Bible who fail to see the central importance of man's spirit in the personal and corporate experience of Christians. As Christians, we have been called to be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19), but we must be clear that this filling begins with the impartation of God's eternal life into our human spirit through regeneration, continues with the spreading of this life into our soul through sanctification, and consummates with the glorification of this life through the

redemption of our bodies. The human spirit is the starting point of God's economical interaction with man, and it makes possible a full reciprocation of intimacy with God.

A Revelatory Affirmation of the Human Spirit

In Zechariah 12:1 God's view concerning His creation is clearly presented: "Thus declares the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him." Despite the wonders of its broad expanse, the heavens are not the focal point of God's economy, and despite the vast diversity of man's earthly habitation, it also is not the focal point. Rather, the spirit of man, as the holy habitation and dwelling place for the processed Triune God (Eph. 2:22), is the focus. The heavens are for the earth, the earth is for man, and man with his spirit is for God. When God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. 2:7), His intimate focus was on the formation of a spiritual receptacle within

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man that would match and ultimately be joined with Him (1 Cor. 6:17). Isaiah the prophet also alluded to the divine priority revealed in Zechariah 12:1 when he spoke for God, saying, "Thus says the Lord, / 'Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. / Where then is a house you could build for Me? / And where is a place that I may rest? / For My hand made all these things, / Thus all these things came into being,' declares the Lord. / But to this one I will look, / To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word'" (Isa. 66:1-2). God does not look to the physical realm of the heavens and the earth for His place of rest; rather, He looks to the human spirit. The apostle Paul echoed the utterance of Isaiah when he spoke to the Greeks on Mars Hill, saying, "The God who made the world and all things in it, this One, being Lord of heaven and earth,

does not dwell in temples made with hands” (Acts 17:24). In the midst of a culture that had confined the consideration of man to scrutinizing the relationship between body and soul and in a location devoted to the worship of gods in physical edifices, the utterance of the Spirit in Paul pointed to the human spirit as the critical part of man for the preparation of God’s ultimate dwelling place.

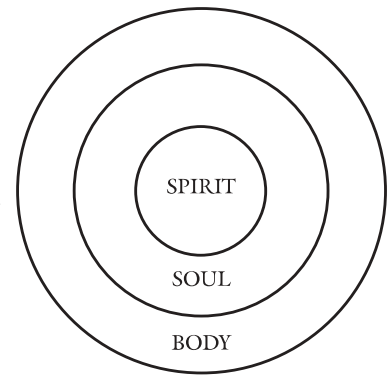
This preparation began with the formation of the human spirit, which is implied by the account given in Genesis 2:7. It is important to note the usage of the term *implied* because it recognizes the presence of mystery and the need for revelation in comprehending the importance of the human spirit in the divine economy. In *The Tripartite Nature of Man*, J. B. Heard begins his discussion of the creation of man with a clear acknowledgment that the Bible does not present a systematic teaching concerning the nature of man, but rather contains a progressive and unfolding revelation:

We have only another caution to make before entering on our task; it is that revelation being a progressive manifestation of the truth of God, the discovery of man’s nature must also be progressive. In the same way that the plurality of Persons in the Godhead, and their relation to each other, was only gradually unfolded in Scripture, so we may expect it to be with the trichotomy of man’s nature, spirit, soul, and body. As in the case of the doctrine of the Trinity it was not fully understood until the Spirit was given, so the distinction of Psyche and Pneuma is implied rather than taught when the race was still in its spiritual infancy....It would be out of harmony with the “analogy of the faith,” if the tripartite nature of man were fully described in those books of the Bible which only contain implied hints of the plurality of persons in the Godhead. All we shall see of the subject will confirm this view of the harmonious way in which doctrines and duties, the nature of God and the nature of man, are unfolded together.

Consistent with the foregoing remark, the account of the creation of man (Gen. ii. 7) rather implies than asserts the trichotomy of spirit, soul, and body. (67-68)

Even though the human spirit is suggested in this fashion, its very suggestion occurs within an account of creation that is vastly more detailed than any of God’s previous acts of creation. With light, God simply declared, “Let there be,” and it came into being. Likewise with all of the other items of creation, the Bible simply records God’s performative declarations, and they sprang into being. Genesis 2:7, however, reveals that God formed man in a detailed way and in a particular sequence: “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (lit.)” From dust, He formed man’s body. With His divine breath, He formed the spirit of man within him, and with

this animating breath, man became a living soul. The tripartite nature of man can be simply illustrated:



If the constitution of man has no special bearing in God’s economical plan, then the level of detail in Genesis 2:7 seems misplaced. When Genesis 2:7 is considered in light of Genesis 1:26, however, the detail takes on added significance. In chapter one the special status of man in bearing the image and likeness of God is revealed. In chapter two the Bible begins to reveal that the attainment of this immanent destiny is generally related to man’s tripartite constitution and specifically related to the human spirit. It is unfortunate that Christian exegetes, who readily defend the doctrine of the Trinity by drawing out the trinitarian implications from God’s declaration in Genesis 1:26, often ignore the clear implication of the formation of the human spirit in the account of man’s creation in Genesis 2:7. Instead of seeing the genesis of the revelation of the human spirit in God’s divine act of breathing, they demand a higher level of textual clarity. Failing to find this initial clarity, they proceed to obfuscate the distinction between soul and spirit in an effort to find a plausible explanation for the Bible’s continuous use of two terms for what they argue is but a single entity. A clear example of this is R. C. H. Lenski’s interpretation of the distinction of soul and spirit in his discussion of 1 Thessalonians 5:23:

The question is simple: “Is man composed of two or of three parts?” In other words, can spirit and soul be divided as soul and body can? A reference to Heb. 4:12 does not establish the affirmative. Man’s material part can be separated from his immaterial part, but the immaterial part cannot be divided; it is not a duality of spirit and soul. Where, as here, spirit and soul are distinguished, the spirit designates our immaterial part as it is related to God, as being capable of receiving the operations of the Spirit of God and of his Word; while soul (*psuche*) designates this same immaterial part in its function of animating the body and also as receiving impressions from the body it animates. (366-367)

Lenski’s explanation that the distinction between soul and spirit should be understood as only a difference in the orientation of the same animating entity, the spirit/soul, is echoed in John Murray’s “Select Lectures in Systematic Theology:” “...‘spirit’ views the principle of life as derived from God and returning to him on the event of death, whereas ‘soul’ views the animating entity as life constituted in a body” (32). Such efforts to deny the distinct existence of the human spirit, however, ignore the sequential progression in Genesis 2:7. The body of man was formed

of the dust of the ground, the human spirit was imparted through the divine breathing of God, and then man became a living soul. With the body, there was a container to house the human spirit, and with the human spirit there was a vessel with the capacity to contain the Triune God and then to fully display the image and likeness of the Triune God through the medium of the soul.

The difference between the soul and spirit cannot be fully appreciated without realizing that the Triune God economically formed His chosen vessel in a specific way to fully satisfy His stated desire for image and dominion. The formation of the human spirit was the first critical step in a process that will consummate in the shining forth of God's image and the exercise of His dominion. According to Proverbs 20:27, "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord." The Hebrew word for *spirit* in this verse, *neshamah*, is the same word that is translated as "breath" in Genesis 2:7. The human spirit, as a lamp, can shine forth God, who is light, because there is a similarity of nature between the Spirit of God and our spirit. In his examination of the creation of man, Heard speaks to this point:

The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives. We speak of the formal and efficient cause as one, not because we wish to confound the agent [the Lord God] with the instrument [the breath of life], but because the instrument is in this case of the same nature as the agent. The Lord God is the efficient cause—doubtless the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life. But the instrument He uses is the breath of lives. It is clear that the breath is here of the same nature as the Being who breathes it. (70)

The human spirit was personally formed by God with His spiritual breath so that man could contact Him, contain Him, and express Him. In the creation of man, God formed the body, breathed a spiritual vessel within this physical framework, and man became a living soul capable of expressing all that God is through the faculties of the soul—mind, emotion, and will. The mind of Christ can be expressed through our mind, the love of God can be expressed through our emotions, and the will of God can be executed through our will. With the body man can contact the physical world, with the soul man can contact the psychological world, and with his spirit man can contact God, who is Spirit. The Lord Jesus confirmed the necessity of the human spirit in contacting God when He said, "An hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also

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seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness" (John 4:23-24). When there is true worship in the human spirit, God's image and dominion are not only expressed, but there is also a dwelling place for God on earth.

The Revelation of the Human Spirit in Types

If the only support or evidence for the existence of the human spirit was a mere implication in Genesis 2:7, then the truth of the human spirit would be less tenable. However, the Bible further

develops the revelation of the human spirit through repeated references to two significant types—the temple and the good land. It has long been recognized that God's desire for a dwelling place on earth in the Old Testament was realized with the building of the temple. It is also generally recognized that the type of the temple in the Old Testament is fully realized in the New Testament in relation to Christians individually (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19) and to the church corporately (Eph. 2:21). As this type relates to man, the threefold division of the temple with the outer court, the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies is a clear picture of the tripartite nature of man, complete with the Holy Spirit dwelling in the innermost part of a Christian, the regenerated human spirit. Many verses reveal that the Triune God not only dwells objectively in the heavens but also dwells subjectively within a person who has been born of the Spirit. God the Father is in us (Eph. 4:6), Christ is in us (2 Cor. 13:5), and the Spirit is in us (Rom. 8:11), not as three separate persons, but as the mutually coexisting and coinhering Triune God. These verses cannot be dismissed as embellished descriptions of our objective acceptance of the status and lordship of our God and Savior. Instead, we should ask how the union of the Triune God with man is possible and where this union occurs. The answer is contained in the Old Testament type. The presence of a man in the outer court or even in the Holy Place was not sufficient to bring him into contact with God. There was a need to pass through the veil in order to be brought into the presence of God. The New Testament charge in Hebrews to "come forward to the Holy of Holies with a true heart in full assurance of faith" is a charge to come into the reality of God by coming forward to our regenerated human spirit (10:22).

In his comment on the Magnificat, Martin Luther referred to the type of the temple to explain Mary's praise in Luke 1:46-47: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has exulted in God my Savior."

In the tabernacle fashioned by Moses there were three separate compartments. The first was called the holy of holies: here was God's dwelling place, and in it there was no light. The second was called the holy place; here stood a candlestick with seven arms and seven lamps. The third was called the outer court; this lay under the open sky and in the full light of the sun. In this tabernacle we have a figure of the Christian man. His spirit is the holy of holies, where God dwells in the darkness of faith, where no light is; for he believes that which he neither sees nor feels nor comprehends. His soul is the holy place, with its seven lamps, that is, all manner of reason, discrimination, knowledge, and understanding of visible and bodily things. His body is the forecourt, open to all, so that men may see his works and manner of life. (304)

Jaroslav Pelikan, the editor of *Luther's Works* (a multi-volume set in which the above translation appears) notes that in the writings of Luther there is support for the "trichotomist idea of human nature as made up of body, soul, and spirit; but there are also places in his writings which seem to speak for the dichotomist idea of man's material and nonmaterial nature as the two parts of his being" (303). Indeed, in other portions of Luther's comment on the Magnificat, there appears to be some confusion as to the distinctive roles of the spirit and soul within man. What is beyond dispute, however, is Luther's faithfulness in recognizing and proclaiming the tabernacle as a "figure of the Christian man," a figure with a threefold division, in which the Triune God dwells in the innermost part. The possibility of satisfying the divine impetus behind this type, that is, the desire of the Triune God to be joined to man as the place of His rest, depends upon the human spirit as the sine qua non of its realization.

The dichotomists who argue that there is an immaterial part in man which can be considered as spirit when it is directed toward God and as soul when it is directed toward the more mundane psychological interactions of man with his surrounding environment fail to see the matter from one important perspective. Unfortunately for them and their experience, it is God's perspective. While their concern is primarily directed toward man's interaction with God, they ignore the intense longing of God to interact with man. When the Triune God spoke concerning Adam in Genesis 2:18, saying, "It is not good for the man to be alone," He was expressing the personal longing that was reverberating within His own heart. God has a desire to be with man, to come to man, and to interact with man, and the fulfillment of this desire requires the preparation of a spiritual organ within man. Simply put, the human spirit is ontologically necessary for the satisfaction of God's heart's desire. As much as we might be satisfied in directing the faculties of our soul toward God, He will not be fully satisfied unless He can mutually interact with us. Equal to His desire that we love Him with our whole heart, our whole soul, our

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whole mind, and our whole strength, is His desire for a place of rest (Mark 12:30; Isa. 66:1). And so to this man He looks, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit. If our interaction with Him occurred only at the level of the soul, our worship would be relegated to only the most objective of forms. We could love Him, we could obey Him, and we could set our mind on Him, but He would remain outside and distant. For His subjective interaction with us, He formed a spirit within us. There is no danger in our acknowledgment of the human spirit, but there is considerable danger in ignoring the human spirit—a danger of falling short of realizing God's stated purpose for man and a danger of failing to satisfy the longing of His heart.

The danger in callously disregarding the human spirit is so tangible that the book of Hebrews contains explicit warnings that illuminate the second prominent type in the Old Testament—the good land of Canaan, including our need

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to journey to enter into that rest. "So then there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God...Let us therefore be diligent to enter into that rest lest anyone fall after the same

example of disobedience" (4:9, 11). This is a clear reference to the journey of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the land of Canaan.

The Dangers of Dichotomy

The teaching of dichotomy—the theological notion that man consists only of body and soul—has dangerous implications for our Christian experience. The Bible reveals that God created man as a tripartite being consisting of spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). Just as the body is distinct from the soul, so the soul is distinct from the spirit. Those who adhere to the doctrine of dichotomy deny the existence of the human spirit. Such a denial has serious implications. Consider the following: "*Who among men knows the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him?*" (1 Cor. 2:11a). To deny the existence of the human spirit is to deny and thereby suppress a crucial part of our God-created humanity. "*Thus declares the Lord who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him*" (Zech. 12:1). The heavens are for the earth; the earth is for man; and man with his spirit is for God and His purpose. Those who deny the human spirit can know neither the meaning of human life nor the eternal purpose of God. The focal point of the carrying out of God's economy is the human spirit (2 Tim. 4:22). To deny the existence of the human spirit is to nullify the outworking of God's economy. God's purpose is revealed in spirit, and to receive this revelation we need "*a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him*" (Eph. 3:5; 1:17). Those who deny the human spirit frustrate their receiving revelation from God through the Word. God is Spirit, not soul (John 4:24). To deny the existence of the human spirit is to deny the possibility of spiritual contact and fellowship between God and man.

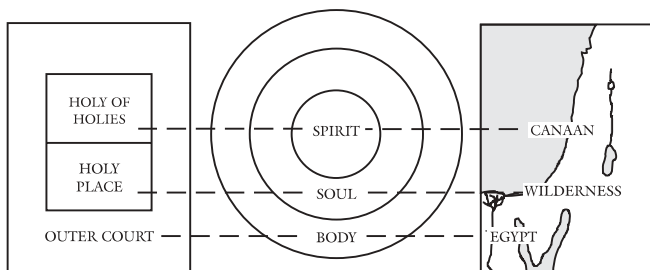
"*That which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (John 3:6). To deny the existence of the human spirit leads to a gross misunderstanding of the nature and experience of regeneration and often entails a repudiation of the biblical truth that the believers in Christ have been born of God in the spirit to become genuine children of God, possessing His life and nature. "*The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God*" (Rom. 8:16). To deny the human spirit is to deny the witnessing of the Spirit with our spirit that we are children of God regenerated by Him. "*He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit*" (1 Cor. 6:17). To deny the human spirit is to deny the organic union of the believers with the Triune God in Christ. To deny the human spirit is to nullify the subjective experience of the processed and consummated Triune God revealed in the New Testament. Those who deny the human spirit can have nothing more than an objective, doctrinal God and an outward religion. "*The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him*" (John 4:23). God the Father desires worship, and "*those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness*" (v. 24). To deny the human spirit is to disregard God's desire and to deny Him the worship He is seeking. "*God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit*" (Rom. 1:9). To deny the human spirit is to nullify the proper service to God, resulting in a service not "*in newness of spirit*" but "*in oldness of letter*" (Rom. 7:6). "*Praying at every time in spirit*" (Eph. 6:18). Genuine prayer is in spirit. Regarding prayer, denying the human spirit has a twofold consequence: neglecting true prayer in the name of Jesus and fostering religious prayers that cannot fulfill God's desire or execute His will. The normal Christian life is a life in the mingled spirit—the regenerated human spirit mingled with the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25). To deny the human spirit is to nullify the Christian life: "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit*" (Phil. 4:23). To deny the human spirit is to deny the subjective experience and enjoyment of the grace of Christ.

"*I bow my knees unto the Father...that He would grant you...to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man*" (Eph. 3:14, 16). Those who deny the human spirit remain weak in their inner man and strong in their outer man—the opposite of God's intention (2 Cor. 4:16). "*Be transformed by the renewing of the mind*" (Rom. 12:2). God intends that after we have been regenerated in our spirit, we gradually be transformed in our soul by being renewed in the spirit of our mind (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:23). The transformation of the soul presupposes the spreading of the mingled spirit into our soul. To deny the spirit is to delay this transformation. Denying the human spirit leads to an avoidance of the cross (Matt. 16:24-26), and this issues in a daily living that is soulish, even fleshly. Those who deny the human spirit remain natural, soulish (1 Cor. 2:14; 3:1), even if they try to cultivate themselves by attempting to improve their fallen humanity. "*If there is...any fellowship of spirit*" (Phil. 2:1). To deny the human spirit is to eliminate the possibility of genuine fellowship among the believers in Christ, for such a fellowship takes place in the regenerated human spirit. "*In whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit*" (Eph. 2:22). To deny the human spirit is to hinder the building up of God's house and to cause God, who longs to dwell in our spirit (Isa. 57:15; 66:2), to remain homeless. Those who deny the human spirit, choosing to remain in themselves, frustrate the building up of the church, the Body of Christ.

—Ron Kangas

Each stage of the journey corresponds with one of the constituent parts of man. Egypt, with the biblical emphasis on its treasures and the children of Israel's lustful longings for its bodily satisfactions, clearly represents the fleshly entanglements associated with our body. Prior to our deliverance through the application of the blood of the Passover Lamb, Christ, we all "conducted ourselves...in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the thoughts" (Eph. 2:3). We have been delivered from the power of the flesh through the death of Christ (Col. 2:11), and we are equipped for our spiritual journey and empowered to walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25) by walking in Him (Col. 2:6), which is simply to walk in our human spirit (Rom. 8:4). However, the journey from the realm of the flesh to the realm of the spirit involves a passage through the wilderness of the soul. Unfortunately, many Christians stumble, fall, and are "strewn along in the wilderness" through a lack of transformation in the soul (1 Cor. 10:5). According to the New Testament, the soul of man is the site where transformation takes place. We are transformed by the renewing of our mind (Rom. 12:2), and our mind will be on the things of the Spirit if we are according to the spirit (Rom. 8:5). The need for transformation is paramount in our experience of the Triune God. Transformation is the life of the Triune God, imparted through regeneration into our human spirit, spreading into every aspect of our mind, emotion, and will. This should be our experience, but often it is not. In *The Economy of God*, Witness Lee comments on the type of our journey into Canaan and includes a useful diagram of the relationship between the types of the temple and Canaan and our human spirit.

The Israelites, who were delivered out of Egypt, instead of going on into Canaan, wandered for many years in the wilderness. What does this typify? It means that many Christians after being saved are simply wandering in the soul. The reason the book to the Hebrews was written is that many Hebrew Christians were saved, but they were wandering in their soul. They would not press on from the wilderness into the good land—that is, into Christ who dwelt in their spirit. We must not continue to wander in our soul, but press on to enter into our spirit, where Christ is our rest. (31)



It is important to note that immediately after speaking of the need to be diligent to enter into the rest which is

Christ in our human spirit, the writer of Hebrews speaks of the dividing of soul and spirit. "For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit and of joints and marrow, and able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (4:12). The context is clear: The wilderness is the soul, and the good land is our spirit. Our entrance into the good land depends upon the constant word of God operating within us to divide soul and spirit. This need for division speaks to a fundamental difference between the soul and the human spirit, just as there was a fundamental distinction between the wilderness and the good land. In our journey toward God, we cannot expect to enter into the rest that has been prepared for us by simply "wandering" through our Christian life, relying only on the elements of our soul. Instead, our soul must be denied in our experience. The rest that we desire is only in our regenerated human spirit, because only there does the Triune God find the place of His rest.

Ultimately in the New Testament, the Old Testament types of the temple and the good land merge into one reality that is available to all regenerated Christians. This reality involves the complete identification of our human spirit, the true Holy of Holies and the true place of rest, with Christ, realized as the indwelling Spirit of the processed and consummated Triune God, who is the allotted portion of the saints in the light (Col. 1:12). The types merge to such an extent, and the identification of the indwelling Spirit with our human spirit is so complete that Paul is compelled to proclaim: "He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). The good land that is our spirit is organically joined to Christ, our allotted portion. The Holy of Holies that is our spirit is organically joined to the tabernacling God. Ultimately, the journey of God toward man consummates in the temple as His dwelling place, and the journey of man toward God consummates with our living and walking in Him as our good land (Col. 2:6; Acts 17:28; Gal. 5:16). These consummations are realized in our human spirit. Those who miss the mark of the human spirit ultimately miss the experience of God's economy, which is the complete union of the Triune God with the tripartite man, beginning with regeneration in our spirit, spreading through the transformation of our soul, and consummating with the redemption of our body. As He looks to us for His place of rest, we need to be diligent to enter into that rest.

A Necessary Critique of Dichotomy

Unfortunately, the clear revelation of the human spirit has been lost to most Christians. Although it was formed and filled in order to satisfy God's immanent desire for complete union with man, which ultimately is the multifarious display of all that God is in the church (Eph. 3:10), it is little understood or exercised (1 Tim. 4:7). Without this vision, the human spirit loses its immediacy in our

Christian experience, and the tripartite nature of man is replaced with a vitiated view of man as being an anthropological composition of just body and soul. With such an emphasis, verses that speak of the human spirit are exegetically subsumed into the category of the soul.

The pervasive teaching of dichotomy in the church can be understood only when it is examined within the context of three converging trends. Historically, the early church accepted and taught the human spirit but eventually ignored it in response to an onslaught of heretical teachings which tarnished this truth by association. J. B. Heard notes: "Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Didymus of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Basil of Caesarea, all note the distinction of soul and spirit, and designate the spirit as that which bears the truest image of God" (37). In "Against Heresies," Irenaeus writes:

For that flesh which has been moulded is not a perfect man in itself, but the body of a man, and part of a man. Neither is the soul itself, considered apart by itself, the man; but it is the soul of a man, and part of a man. Neither is the spirit a man, for it is called the spirit, and not a man; but the commingling and union of all these constitutes the perfect man. And for this cause does the apostle, explaining himself, make it clear that the saved man is a complete man as well as a spiritual man; saying thus in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, "Now the God of peace sanctify you perfect (*perfectos*); and may your spirit, and soul, and body be preserved whole without complaint to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ." Now what was his object in praying that these three—that is, soul, body, and spirit—might be preserved to the coming of the Lord, unless he was aware of the [future] reintegration and union of the three, and [that they should be heirs of] one and the same salvation? (532)

The acceptance of the human spirit was tarnished by its specific association with the heresy of Apollinaris. In *History of the Christian Church*, Philip Schaff remarks:

Apollinaris, therefore, taught the deity of Christ, but denied the completeness (*teleiotes*) of his humanity, and, taking his departure from the Nicene postulate of the *homoousion*, ran into the Arian heresy, which likewise put the divine Logos in the place of the human spirit in Christ. (711)

Apollinaris denied the humanity of Christ and the resulting rational, emotive, and willful acts of His soul by equating the human spirit of Christ with the divine Logos and then by ascribing His human activities to the Logos. Inherent within the Apollinarian heresy is the implicit witness of the church's acceptance of the human spirit, for how else could Apollinaris have developed a faulty conception of the role of the human spirit in Christ if the church had not generally accepted the existence of

Concerning the Spirit of Man

The spirit contains the function of the conscience, although this does not mean that the spirit is the conscience. We can see this from the following verses: "For Jehovah your God *hardened* his spirit" (Deut. 2:30). "Jehovah...saves those who are *contrite* in spirit" (Psa. 34:18). "Renew a *steadfast* spirit within me" (Psa. 51:10). "When Jesus had said these things, He became *troubled* in His spirit" (John 13:21). "His spirit was *provoked* within him as he beheld that the city was full of idols" (Acts 17:16). "For you have not received a spirit of slavery bringing you into *fear* again" (Rom. 8:15). "The Spirit Himself *witnesses* with our spirit that we are *children* of God" (Rom. 8:16). "For I,...present in the spirit, have already *judged*, as if being present, him who has thus done this" (1 Cor. 5:3). "I had no *rest* in my spirit" (2 Cor. 2:13). "For God has not given us a spirit of *cowardice*" (2 Tim. 1:7). The spirit has the function of intuition, or consciousness. We can see this from the following verses: "The spirit is *willing*" (Matt. 26:41). "Jesus, *knowing* fully in His spirit" (Mark 2:8). "And He *groaned* deeply in His spirit" (Mark 8:12). "Jesus...was moved with *indignation* in His spirit" (John 11:33). "This man...being *fervent* in spirit" (Acts 18:25). "I am going *bound* in the spirit to Jerusalem" (Acts 20:22). "For who among men *knows* the things of man, except the spirit of man which is in him?" (1 Cor. 2:11). "For they *refreshed* my spirit and yours" (1 Cor. 16:18). "Because his spirit has been *refreshed* by all of you" (2 Cor. 7:13). The spirit has the function of fellowship, or worship. We can see this from the following verses: "And my spirit has *exulted* in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47). "The true worshippers will *worship* the Father in spirit and truthfulness" (John 4:23). "For God is my witness, whom I *serve* in my spirit" (Rom. 1:9). "We *serve* in newness of spirit" (Rom. 7:6). "You have received a spirit of sonship in which we *cry*, Abba, Father!" (Rom. 8:15). "The Spirit Himself *witnesses* with our spirit" (Rom. 8:16). "But he who is *joined* to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). "I will *pray* with the spirit" (1 Cor. 14:15). "If you *bless* with the spirit" (1 Cor. 14:16). "And he *carried me away* in spirit" (Rev. 21:10). From these verses we see that the spirit includes at least three parts—the conscience, the intuition, and the fellowship. (Nee 16-18)

the human spirit in man? Nevertheless, there was a reaction to Apollinaris. Heard points out: "With the error of Apollinaris, who denied to Christ a human Pneuma, the reaction came, and the trichotomy fell into disfavor, and was neglected even in the East" (37).

Given the historical reaction and subsequent neglect of the church to the biblical revelation of the tripartite nature of man, any further development of the doctrine of man could not help but be profoundly influenced by the prevailing philosophical conceptions of man in successive ages. While it is interesting to delve into the details of the many classical Greek, Latin, Renaissance, and modern variations on the conception of man, it is more instructive to note two generally applicable principles in these conceptions and the extent to which these trends have influenced Christian conceptions of man. Philosophical discussions of man, from the time of the pre-Socratics until today, traditionally define man as a composite of material and immaterial substances. With the Gnostics, this duality was expressed as a fundamental antinomy of the physical and the spiritual; with Plato this duality was expressed as matter and ideal; and with Descartes this duality was represented as a separation of mind and body. Even postmodern conceptions of man tend only to speak of man as being an integrated whole of mind and body. In all these variations, man remains a duality of either opposing or integrateable substances. Unfortunately, the evangelical response to the intrusion of these philosophical conceptions often is only a spirited defense, not of the human spirit, but of the essential harmony of the body and soul in God's original creation. The prevailing Christian position can be characterized as a response to the antinomical teachings of the Gnostics. Rather than pointing to the human spirit as the mark of God's economy, they simply argue for an instrumental role for both the body and the soul in God's plan. R. C. Sproul in *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith* illustrates this tendency and also unwittingly points to the second principle that is generally operative in discussions of the nature of man, that is, a tendency to meaningless and even deadening abstractions.

The biblical view of human beings differs sharply from early Greek views. Our body and soul make up a *duality*, not a *dualism*. In Greek dualistic theories the body and soul are seen as incompatible substances that coexist in constant tension. They are fundamentally incompatible. Usually dualism asserts that there is something inherently evil or imperfect about anything physical and therefore sees the body as an evil container for the pure soul....The biblical view of the body is that it is created good and has no inherent evil in its physical substance. Yet it suffers from moral corruption just like the soul. (133)

Despite Sproul's attempt to rescue his conception of man from the vestiges of Gnosticism, the principle of dichotomy is present in his argument. His discussion never goes far beyond an abstract discussion of the terms involved. Abstraction has been the hiding place for philosophers throughout the ages. It ennobles an argument that otherwise would seem patently foolish. We may think and

therefore regard ourselves as being but does such a thought really shed any light upon the purpose of man in God's creation? If we regard ourselves as a duality, rather than a dualism, are we helped in any manner to be strengthened with power through the Spirit into our inner man (the human spirit) so that Christ can spread in our heart and make His home there (Eph. 3:16-17)? No! We are left only with some objective assurance of our doctrinal purity. We may have a higher regard for our body, but our spirit still remains to us the hidden man of our heart (1 Pet. 3:4).

Finally, given the philosophical tendency toward abstraction, there is an exegetical trend which maintains the dichotomous nature of man as a hallmark of the truth. This trend essentially involves the avoidance of a clear discussion of the functions of soul and spirit as they are presented in the Bible, a discussion which would remove the abstraction and elevate the biblical revelation of man above the realm of human philosophical systems. Perhaps the fullest analysis of the functions of the spirit and soul in man was presented by Watchman Nee in *The Spiritual Man* (see excerpts on pages 44 and 46). Through studying the context of the many references to spirit and soul in the Bible, a picture of remarkable consistency emerges, namely that the spirit of man consists of the function of conscience, intuition, and fellowship, and the soul consists of the function of mind, emotion, and will. In all these verses, the functions do not overlap, indicating a clear distinction between spirit and soul, and thus of the need for a discernment between them. The teaching of dichotomy reflects only an imprecise and generalized examination of these verses. It is indeed ironic that some of the most vociferous refutations of the tripartite nature of man come from those who vigorously defend the infallibility of the Word of God. Although they are willing to ascribe every word to God, they somehow are willing to strip Him of any precise intentionality in the utterances of those words. God's Word is infallible, and His words are precise.

Left with generalities, weighed down by philosophical abstractions, and cast about by the waves of historicism, most Christian scholars have missed the mark of the human spirit. In this failure, they have lost sight of God's economy, which is the spreading of the Triune God into every part of our being. After our regeneration in our human spirit, the life of the Triune God should spread into our mind, emotion, and will. Ultimately, our body will be glorified in this life. Daily we should exercise to walk in newness of life by denying our soul-life, through the application of the processed and consummated Triune God to our unrenewed mind, our fickle emotions, and our stubborn will. Such an exercise will reproduce God's image in us for all to see, but it is utterly dependent upon our realization and experience of the Triune God in our human spirit. By the breath of the Almighty, there is indeed a spirit in man (Job 32:8). AFC

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Concerning the Soul of Man

The soul includes the will... "Now *set* your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God" (1 Chron. 22:19). "They desire and *lift up* their soul to return to dwell there" (Jer. 44:14, Amplified Bible). "The things that my soul *refused* to touch" (Job 6:7). "So that my soul *chooseth* strangling, and death rather than my life" (Job 7:15). The words "will" and "desire" in the foregoing verses show that they refer to the human will... The soul also includes the intellect or the mind: "I take from them... that whereupon they *set* their minds [lit., souls], their sons and their daughters" (Ezek. 24:25). "*With despiteful* minds [lit., soul]" (Ezek. 36:5). "That the soul be *without knowledge*, it is not good" (Prov. 19:2). "How long will I *bear concern* in my soul" (Psa. 13:2). "Marvelous are thy works; and that my soul *knoweth* right well" (Psa. 139:14). "My soul *remembers* them well / And is bowed down within me" (Lam. 3:20). "*Keep sound wisdom* and discretion: so shall they be life unto thy soul" (Prov. 3:21-22). "So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul" (Prov. 24:14). Knowledge, setting of the mind, having in remembrance, etc., are all activities of man's mind, or intellect...

The soul also includes the emotions... The soul can love: "And you shall *love* Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 6:5). "The soul of Jonathan was *knit* with the soul of David, and Jonathan *loved* him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1). "And you shall exchange the money for anything that your soul *desires*... or for anything that your soul *would like*" (Deut. 14:26). "Whatsoever thy soul *desireth*" (1 Sam. 20:4). "My soul *longs*, indeed even *faints*, / For the courts of Jehovah" (Psa. 84:2). "That which your soul *pitieth*" (Ezek. 24:21). "So my soul *pants* / For You" (Psa. 42:1). "Tell me, O thou whom my soul *loveth*" (S.S. 1:7). "My soul *desires* You in the night" (Isa. 26:9). "My Beloved in whom My soul has *found delight*" (Matt. 12:18). "My soul *magnifies* the Lord" (Luke 1:46). "And a sword will *pierce through* your own soul" (Luke 2:35). These few verses reveal one function of the soul, which is to love. The desire to love comes from the soul. Hence, human love is a part of the function of the soul. The soul can hate: "So that his life *abhorreth* bread, and his soul dainty meat" (Job 33:20). "The lame and the blind, that are *hated* of David's soul" (2 Sam. 5:8). "My soul was impatient with them, and their soul also *detested* me" (Zech. 11:8). "My soul is *weary* of my life" (Job 10:1). "Their soul *abhorreth* all manner of meat" (Psa. 107:18). These few verses teach us that hatred is a function of the soul.

The soul can be affected in other ways: "The soul of all the people was *grieved*" (1 Sam. 30:6). "Her soul is *vexed*" (2 Kings 4:27). "His soul was *grieved* for the misery of Israel" (Judg. 10:16). "How long will ye *vex* my soul" (Job 19:2). "My soul will *exult* in My God" (Isa. 61:10). "Cause the soul of Your servant to *rejoice*" (Psa. 86:4). "Their soul *fainted* in them" (Psa. 107:5). "Why art you bowed down, O my soul? / And why do you *groan* within me?" (Psa. 42:5). "Return unto thy rest, O my soul" (Psa. 116:7). "My soul *breaketh* for the longing" (Psa. 119:20). "My soul *melts* for heaviness" (Psa. 119:28). "*Sweet* to the soul" (Prov. 16:24). "Let your soul *delight* itself in fatness" (Isa. 55:2). "When my soul *fainted* within me" (Jonah 2:7). "My soul is exceedingly *sorrowful*" (Matt. 26:38). "Now is my soul *troubled*" (John 12:27). "*Tormented* his righteous soul day after day" (2 Pet. 2:8). These few verses tell us how the soul is affected. The feeling of being affected comes from the soul. From the above verses we can see the functions in our emotions. Love, hatred, feelings of being affected, sensations, etc., all come from the soul. This shows us that our emotion is also a part of our soul. (Nee 21-23)