

G L O S S A

The Parts of Man in Translation

It is important to understand the biblical revelation of the parts of man in order to begin to answer the age-old question posed by the psalmist, "What is man?" The Bible uses definite words—*spirit*, *soul*, and *body*—to describe the parts of man, but modern exegetes and translators of the Bible tend to blur the distinctions between these words without carefully distinguishing between their functions. This tendency is most evident in modern translations of the Bible, especially in the equating of the soul and the spirit. This trend, however, veils the believers from the proper experiences that are available in God's economy.

The Biblical Revelation of the Parts of Man

The Old Testament uses three main words to refer to the three parts of man, and the New Testament uses four. By the time of the New Testament, the distinctions and contrasts between them become finer, reflecting a progressive revelation or realization concerning the parts of man. In the Old Testament *basar* (flesh) occurs approximately two hundred and sixty-six times and describes the outer physical aspect of humanity; *nephesh* occurs seven hundred and fifty-four times referring to the soul as well as to the whole person or life; and *ruach* occurs three hundred and seventy-eight times (meaning wind, air, breath, and spirit) with over one hundred times of these being references to the human spirit. It is uncertain whether the individual writers of the Old Testament had a clear understanding of the tripartite nature of man and of the significance of the distinction between spirit and soul. However, their use of different words for the parts of man is sufficient to point readers of the Old Testament toward a revelation of the tripartite nature of man.

In the New Testament there is clarity related to the tripartite nature of man. First Thessalonians 5:23 says, "And the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit [*pneuma*] and soul [*psychē*] and body [*sōma*] be preserved complete [*holoklēros*], without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." This verse contains a clear reference to the tripartite nature of man, with each part (*klēros*) being specified explicitly in the same context.¹ The New Testament writers followed the Septuagint and used *sarx* one hundred and fifty-one times (and *sōma* about one hundred and twenty-nine times) to refer to the physical aspect of humanity, *psychē* one hundred and five times for the psychological aspect of humanity, and *pneuma* three hundred and

eighty-five times. Approximately eighty of these latter instances refer to the human spirit.

Blurring the Inward Parts of Man

While New Testament writers, particularly Paul, endeavored to bring out the fine distinctions within and between the parts of man, a great number of modern exegetes and translators have blurred these distinctions particularly when considering the immaterial parts of man. These scholars principally use the biblical data to demonstrate that man is of two parts, rather than tripartite.² In so doing, they neglect to see the Bible's progressive revelation and the clear distinction in the functions of man's inward parts. Those who hold to man being only dichotomous in nature equate the soul with the spirit, neglecting the fact that the parts of man often are presented from the point of view of experience rather than from just an anthropological perspective. They also overlook places where these immaterial parts are definitely distinguished or contrasted. This blurring of distinctions has also affected the modern translations which have been inconsistent in the way they translate *ruach* and *pneuma* when they reference the human spirit.

Equating the Soul with the Spirit

Three reasons are typically given for equating the soul with the spirit. Scholars claim that 1) the words are synonymous, especially in parallel structures, 2) the words occur with the same predicates, and 3) that both *soul* and *spirit* can be replaced with a personal pronoun when referring to the whole person. Parallelism, however, is rarely indicative of synonymy; similar predicates rarely are used with different parts in the original languages; and many parts other than just the spirit are used to refer to the whole person through the literary device of synecdoche.

Spirit and *soul* occur in the same context in the Hebrew Bible mostly in parallel lines of poetry. Even though the parts are not set in direct contrast to each other, as they are in certain places in the New Testament, it is better to view the second member of the couplet as an enlargement or expansion of the idea found in the first member of the parallel couplet rather than as a synonym.³ One example cited as synonymous parallelism is Job 7:11: "Therefore, I will not restrain my mouth; / I will speak in the anguish of my

spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.” Rather than taking spirit and soul as synonymous, it is better to view this as the full exercise of Job’s tripartite being giving vent to his frustrations. A part of the body, the mouth, functions to give utterance to the anguish of the spirit and the bitterness of the soul. Another example is Isaiah 26:9a: “With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early” (KJV). Here we can see the exercise of more than one part of the inner being toward God. A third example is Philippians 1:27: “Only, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, that whether coming and seeing you or being absent, I may hear of the things concerning you, that you stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together along with the faith of the gospel.” In this verse *spirit* and *soul* have two different predicates indicating the different functions of each part in the activity of gospel preaching. Parallel structures often can better be seen as the exercise of more than one part in a series of related, but distinct, activities.

Dichotomists also claim that *spirit* and *soul* are associated with the same predicates or occur in the same context. However, very few predicates that occur with *spirit* and *soul* actually occur with both, especially when the predicates are compared from the original languages. It seems as if the writers of the Bible were either intentionally or unintentionally careful in using particular words with each part rather than randomly assigning the same predicates to different parts. For example, English translations associate seeking, desiring, or longing with spirit, soul, and heart; but different words are used in Hebrew. One verb *seek* (*chaphas*) occurs only with *spirit* (e.g., Psa. 77:6), another (*darash*) occurs only with *heart* and *soul*, and *desire* (*ta’awah*) or *longing* occurs only with *soul* and *heart*. In the example cited earlier, Isaiah 26:9, *the soul desiring* (*’awah*) is parallel to *the spirit seeking early* (*shachar*).

Most of the predicates that occur with both *spirit* and *soul*, such as *take heed to* (e.g., Mal. 2:15; Deut. 4:9), *be saved* (e.g., 1 Cor. 5:5; Heb. 10:39), *find rest* (e.g., 2 Cor. 7:13; Matt. 11:29), *be exasperated* (lit., *be short*, e.g., Job 21:4; Num. 21:4), *be troubled* (e.g., John 13:21; John 12:27), and *depart* (*in death*, e.g., Psa. 146:4; Gen. 35:18), are hardly unique to a particular part and those that are can be seen as a reflection of the interrelatedness of the two parts. Feelings such as joy, exultation, or sorrow and grief can have their source in the spirit but are expressed through the soul.⁴ As O’Grady points out there is interrelatedness between the parts or aspects: “These three elements of the psyche—intellect, will, and emotions—are all interrelated and are further grounded in spirit and manifested on the level of the bodily” (129).

Certain activities such as being fervent in spirit (Rom. 12:11), purposing in spirit (Acts 19:21), having love in the S/spirit (Col. 1:8; cf. 2 Tim. 1:7—a spirit of love), and having joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17) are activities of the

spirit manifested through the soul—purposing through the will; loving and having joy through the emotions.

Dichotomists also point out that both spirit and soul refer to the whole person or being and can be replaced by a personal pronoun, for example, most of Paul’s Epistles close with either “Grace...be with your spirit” (Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; Philem. 25) or “Grace...be with you” (Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 16:23; 2 Cor. 13:14; etc.). While the soul is equivalent to the self (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36, cf. Luke 9:25) or the person (Exo. 1:5; Deut. 10:22), the same cannot be said of the spirit. Dichotomists fail to distinguish this usage from that of the literary device of synecdoche, in which part of the person (usually the most significant part for the action) is used for the whole person (e.g., hand for sailor). Synecdoche is not unique to spirit or soul, but is used also in relation to many other parts (e.g., hands, head, feet).

The Translation of Ruach and Pneuma

Equating the soul with the spirit has not only affected exegesis but also the translation of *soul* and *spirit*. Older translations such as the Septuagint and the King James Version (KJV), American Standard Version (ASV), and Darby’s New Translation on the whole maintain the distinction between *spirit* and *soul*. Unfortunately, many of the more recent modern English translations, such as the New American Standard (NASB), New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), New International Version (NIV), Today’s English Version (TEV), and The Living Bible (TLB), have not been consistent in maintaining the distinction particularly when translating *ruach* or *pneuma* in verses referring to the human spirit. They 1) consider *ruach* or *pneuma* as referring to the Spirit of God rather than the human spirit; 2) translate them as a virtue or feeling (e.g., courage or anger); 3) translate them as another part (e.g., mind or heart); or 4) do not translate the word, but instead use a pronoun as the subject of the predicate.

English translations usually follow the convention of capitalizing Spirit when it refers to the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of God and using a lowercase spirit when the human spirit is referenced. There are about forty-two places in the New Testament where there is some ambiguity as to whether the divine or human spirit is referred to. Most of these cases can be considered as referencing the mingled spirit.

It is difficult to discern the word *spirit* used in this chapter, in Gal. 5, and in other places in the New Testament, unless it is clearly designated to denote God’s Holy Spirit or our regenerated human spirit, as in v. 9 and v. 16 of this chapter. According to the usage in the New Testament, the word *spirit*, as used in this verse, denotes our regenerated human spirit indwelt by and mingled with the Spirit, who is the consummation of the Triune God (v. 9). This corresponds with 1 Cor. 6:17, “He who is joined to the Lord [who is

the Spirit—2 Cor. 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:45] is one spirit”—one mingled spirit. (Recovery Version, Rom. 8:4, note 3)

In cases where the mingled spirit is referenced, translators have to decide on the emphasis or perspective of the reference. In several instances most versions capitalize *spirit*, even though a lowercase *spirit*, referring to the human spirit or the mingled spirit, may be more appropriate, particularly when there is a human subject of the verb preceding it: *David calls Him Lord in spirit* (Matt. 22:43); *we serve in newness of spirit* (Rom. 7:6); *we need to walk and be according to, set the mind on, and be in the spirit* (8:4-6, 9); *the believers are a dwelling place of God in spirit* (Eph. 2:22); *the mystery was revealed to the apostles and prophets in spirit* (3:5); *we need to be filled and pray in spirit* (5:18; 6:18); *there is fellowship of spirit* (Phil. 2:1); *some have no spirit* (Jude 19); and *John was in or carried away in spirit* (Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10, also NRSV). The context of these verses suggests that the emphasis is being placed on the human spirit. This stress, however, does not mitigate the role that the divine Spirit plays in these actions.

Sometimes *ruach* or *pneuma* is translated as a virtue. This occurs more frequently in the Old Testament particularly in the NIV⁵ in which *the spirit of wisdom* (as in Deut. 34:9) is translated *wisdom* (Exo. 28:3), *a spirit of understanding* becomes *understanding* (Job 20:3), *an excellent spirit* becomes *exceptional qualities* (Dan. 6:3), *trustworthy of spirit* becomes *trustworthy* (Prov. 11:13, also NASB), *patience of spirit and pride of spirit* just *patience and pride* (Eccl. 7:8), *no more spirit* becomes *no courage* (Josh. 2:11; 5:1, also NASB and NRSV), and *a gentle spirit* (as in 1 Cor. 4:21) becomes *gently* (Gal. 6:1). *Spirit* is also translated as an adjective or adverb: *Oppressed in spirit* becomes *deeply troubled* (1 Sam. 1:15, also NRSV), *provoked in spirit* becomes *greatly distressed* (Acts 17:16, also NRSV), and *fervent in spirit* becomes *with great fervor* (Acts 18:25) or *burning enthusiasm* (NRSV).

In a number of places *ruach* or *pneuma* is translated as a part of the soul or heart, particularly in the NIV. For example, it is translated *mind* (Gen. 26:35, KJV; 41:8; Dan. 2:1; 5:12; Prov. 29:11, KJV; Ezek. 11:5; 20:32; Hab. 1:11, KJV), *feelings* (Num. 5:14, 30), *hostility* (2 Chron. 21:16, cf. NRSV), *rage* (Job 15:13), *temper* (Prov. 16:32, also NRSV), *resentment* (Judg. 8:3, cf. NASB, NRSV), *anger* (Eccl. 10:4, also NRSV, cf. NASB), *even-tempered* (Prov. 17:27), *heart* (2 Chron. 36:22; Ezra 1:1, 5; Isa. 19:3; Prov. 1:23, cf. NRSV), and *motives* (Prov. 16:2, also NASB). In the NIV New Testament *serve with my spirit* becomes *serve with my whole heart* (Rom. 1:9), *no rest in my spirit* becomes *no peace of mind* (2 Cor. 2:13, also NRSV), *his spirit refreshed* becomes *mind set at rest* (2 Cor. 7:13, also NRSV), and *spirit of your mind* becomes *attitude of your minds* (Eph. 4:23). There are even more deviations in the TLB: *the Spirit witnesses with our spirit* becomes *the Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts* (Rom. 8:16); *the saved spirit* becomes *the saved*

soul (1 Cor. 5:5), *with you in spirit* becomes *my heart is with you* (Col. 2:5), *the dividing of the soul and spirit* becomes *cutting swift and deep into our innermost thoughts and desires with all their parts, exposing us for what we really are* (Heb. 4:12).

Spirit is not translated or seen to refer to the whole being, particularly in paraphrase versions, such as the TEV and TLB, but also in the other versions. *His spirit revived* becomes *he was revived* (1 Sam. 30:12, NIV), *controlled spirit* becomes *self-control* (Prov. 25:28, NIV and NRSV), *my spirit be impatient* becomes *I be impatient* (Job. 21:4, NIV, NRSV, and NASB), *troubles my spirit* becomes *troubles me* (Dan. 2:3, NIV), *take heed to your spirit* becomes *take heed to yourselves* (Mal. 2:15-16, NRSV), *no more spirit in her* becomes *she was overwhelmed* (1 Kings 10:5; 2 Chron. 9:4, NIV), *sigh deeply in spirit* becomes *sigh deeply* (Mark 8:12, NIV), *purposed in his spirit* becomes *decided* (Acts 19:21, NIV), *the spirit of man* becomes *the person himself* (1 Cor. 2:11, TLB), *one spirit* becomes *one person* (1 Cor. 6:17, TLB), and *with your spirit* becomes *with you all* (Phil. 4:23; Philem. 25, TEV).

These ways of not translating *ruach* or *pneuma* as *spirit* hinder us from certain experiences. When *ruach* or *pneuma* is translated by *Spirit*, the divine Spirit rather than the need to exercise our spirit is emphasized. By translating *spirit* as a virtue, the source of these virtues, which are not just human virtues produced by the exercise of our natural disposition but divine attributes expressed through human virtues, is ignored. When *ruach* or *pneuma* is translated as something other than *spirit*, believers are focused on the wrong part of man in the search for genuine experience.

The Contrast between Soul and Spirit in God's Economy

In God's economy there is a need to distinguish between the parts of man, in particular between the spirit and the soul. In certain places, especially in the New Testament, there is a definite distinction between the two. Spirit and soul are strikingly contrasted in places in the New Testament. In Romans 8:5-7 the mind (*phronēma*) is torn between being set on the flesh and on the spirit (in which the law of the Spirit of life dwells). In 1 Corinthians 14:14-15 the mind (*nous*) is contrasted with the spirit, and it is unfruitful if prayer or singing in the spirit is in an unknown language or tongue. The spirit and soul are contrasted in Hebrews 4:12: "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." This is a crucial verse to indicate the need of dividing, or discerning, between the spirit and the soul. Just as the marrow is contained in the bones, so the spirit is contained in the soul. Only the living and operative word of God can accomplish this dividing.

Another place where there is contrast between soul and spirit is related to the body. While the human spirit is in the midst

of the body (lit., *sheath* Dan. 7:15; cf. Job 32:18; Psa. 143:4; Isa. 19:3; 26:9), the soul is more intimately related to the body, being the product of the union of the breath of God and the body made from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). The body is a soulish body (cf. 1 Cor. 15:44). Through the process of transformation (of the soul) and transfiguration, the body becomes a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:44). The note on 1 Thessalonians 5:23 in the Scofield Reference Bible states, "To assert, therefore, that there is no difference between soul and spirit is to assert that there is no difference between the mortal body and the resurrection body" (1270).⁶

Jude 19 also defines those who are soulish as having no spirit (the human spirit not the Spirit of God), who, as Alford says, "have not indeed ceased to have *pneuma*, as a part of their own tripartite nature: but they have ceased to possess it in any worthy sense: it is degraded beneath and under the power of the *psychē*, the personal life, so as to have no real vitality of its own" (540).

There are also crucial experiences that are particularly related only to the spirit or the soul. The human spirit (not the soul) needs to be regenerated by the Spirit of God (John 3:5-6) to receive the life that can overcome sin, death, the flesh; we walk and live according to the spirit (Rom. 8:4; Gal. 5:16, 25); and we should serve and worship God in our spirit (Rom. 1:9; John 4:24). The human spirit is the crucial organ with which we can know (*oida*) ourselves (1 Cor. 2:11) and receive the revelations of the mysteries of God and Christ (Eph. 3:5). On the other hand, the life of the soul, or the self (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23) needs to be denied; the mind of the soul is in need of transformation by renewing (Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18); and the faculties of the soul are in the process of experiencing God's salvation—the salvation of the soul (1 Pet. 1:9; James 1:21; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; cf. Matt. 16:25; Luke 17:33; and Heb. 10:39).

If we want to arrive at a proper understanding of the parts of man according to the revelation of the Bible, it is important that we pay attention to the different words used in the Bible to describe the parts of man. We should also pay attention to the progressive revelation of man in God's economy. The blurring of distinctions, particularly in equating the human spirit with the soul by exegetes and translators of the Bible, unfortunately veils the truth and hinders the believers from the proper experiences in God's economy. Indeed, we should pay more attention to what the writers of the Bible actually say, for in referring to the parts of man, their primary concern is to bring their readers into a genuine spiritual experience and not merely to make doctrinal statements about the parts of man.

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Notes

¹F. F. Bruce points out that from just this verse "it is precarious to try to construct a tripartite doctrine of human nature on the juxtaposition of the three nouns *pneuma*, *psychē* and *sōma*" (130). However, the doctrine of the tripartite nature of man does not draw from just this verse but from the whole Bible. This verse provides a strong confirmation and makes refutation of the tripartite nature of man, for the sake of upholding the doctrine of dichotomy, both difficult and problematic.

²When more than one part is mentioned in the same context, the Bible almost always deals with two (rather than three) parts. If only the immaterial parts (such as the soul, heart, or the spirit) were paired with the flesh or body, then a case could be made that man has only two parts. However, more often the immaterial parts are paired, and, in the New Testament, contrasted.

³At least not in the sense of being interchangeable. Kugel and Alter, for example, consider that the second member of the parallel structure primarily adds new information in the way of continuity, consequentiality, intensification, or progression.

⁴A number of actions or conditions are attributed to both the spirit and the heart (but not to the soul) such as willing (Psa. 51:12—spirit, cf. Exo. 35:5, 22; 2 Chron. 29:31—heart), right (Psa. 51:10—spirit, cf. Psa. 57:7; 108:1; 112:7—heart), broken (Isa. 65:14; Psa. 51:17—spirit, cf. Psa. 34:18—heart), and hard (1 Sam. 1:15—spirit, cf. Ezek. 2:4; 3:7—heart), but these can be attributed to the fact that the conscience is shared by both the spirit and heart. In addition a general verb *tithēmi* (lit., put, place) is used for Paul *purposing* in his spirit (Acts 19:21) and Ananias and Sapphira *contriving* in their heart (Acts 5:4). The heart is a composite of the three parts of the soul and the conscience. The soul consists of a thinking capability, intellect or mind; emotions; and will; and the spirit consists of conscience, fellowship, and intuition. See *A & C*, Vol. I, No. 2. 44, 46.

⁵In the following citations *ruach* and *pneuma* are translated literally as *spirit* in order to compare with the other English versions.

⁶This note was heavily edited in the New Scofield Reference Bible, perhaps to accommodate the view of dichotomists.

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