

Session 1: What is Man?

Scripture Text: Psalm 8:3 - 6

*“Nearly all the wisdom we possess,
that is to say, true and sound wisdom,
consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.”
(John Calvin)*

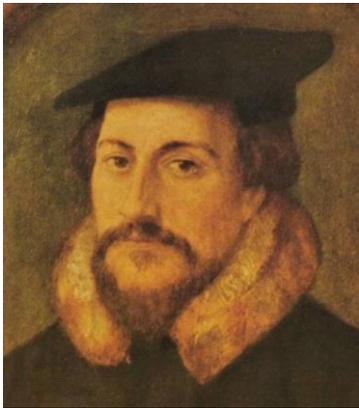
Man cannot study God in abstraction. All that we say in regard to the attributes of God, we say in terminology common to human experience. We say that God is omnipotent, because *power* and *ability* are concepts we understand. We say that God is omnipresent, for our spatial limitations provide us with a framework within which we can conceive of a Being not thus limited. We say that God is omniscient, for knowledge, and the acquisition of knowledge, is one of Man’s most noble pursuits. Even such concepts as Infinitude and Eternity, while without equivalent in human experience, are nonetheless analogous to those dimensions by which human experience is bound: Space and Time. Thus the very study of God involves Man, not merely as the one who studies, but as the paradigm through which the concept of God is mediated to human knowledge. “All the positive notions which we frame of the attributes of God are derived from the properties of our own souls.”¹

The reciprocity of knowledge – the knowledge of God and the knowledge of Man – is also bound up in the biblical origination of Man as ‘*made in God’s image.*’ God, as it were, *put Himself in Man*, so that the Creator and His greatest Creation would be forever bound – inseparable either in blessing or in wrath. This interrelatedness is found throughout the Bible, but especially in the Wisdom Literature. For instance,

He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.
(Ecclesiastes 3:11)

¹ Thornwell, James Henley *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell; Volume 1. Theological* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust; 1974); 223.

This is a crucial verse in the study of both God and Man, for it indicates the motivation of study – *God has set eternity in Man’s heart* – and the search after the knowledge of God – *to find out the work which God has done* – and finally the frustration of that search – *yet so that man will not find out...* Deep inside the heart of man is the awareness that he is different from the rest of Creation, *made for a little while lower than the angels*, and that he cannot find out himself without also finding God. Nor can man



John Calvin (1509-64)

find God without also finding himself. It was in profound awareness of this reciprocal relationship between Man and God, that John Calvin opened his *Institutes* with the heading: *Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God.*² True self awareness, Calvin reasons, leads a man to acknowledge that nothing of his own giftedness, his own intelligence, is self-derived. “For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from

ourselves.”³ Man stands too far above the rest of the animal world, and infinitely above the inanimate world, to be a product of self-development or evolution. Yet, Calvin goes on to surmise, for all his talents Man is inconsolably unhappy, and it is this unhappiness that must lead Man to the contemplation of a Being higher than himself, in whom happiness might be found.⁴

But the knowledge of self is only one half of the equation; alone it renders true understanding impossible. “Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God’s face.”⁵ Without the contemplation of God, Man becomes his own standard of all things. The result is a grotesque caricature in which Man is exalted in his own eyes as the Supreme Being of the universe, without fault – or at least possessing the power to overcome any and all

² Calvin, John *Institutes of the Christian Religion* translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press; 1960); 35.

³ *Idem.*

⁴ *Ibid.*; 36.

⁵ *Ibid.*; 37.

faults, or (and this is the present state of Man), denying that faults are even a pertinent category of thought. Man looks *down* from his pinnacle upon the lowly Earth and its other inhabitants, but he fails (or refuses) to look *up* into Heaven. This distorted self-awareness further intensifies Man's misery, for deep down he *knows* that he is not the greatest being of all; he is aware that he is but dust. Thus Calvin links the study of God - theology proper - with the study of Man - Anthropology: "As a consequence, we must infer that man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with God's majesty."⁶

In Systematics we are forced to separate the study of God and the study of Man due to the limitations of our finite, logical minds. Or perhaps 'forced' is not the right word; we *choose* to separate and categorize the various aspects of this reciprocal study into two branches of Systematic Theology: Theology and Anthropology. Then comes Christology and Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Pneumatology, and Eschatology. This is the classic style of human thought as it pertains to Christian doctrine - or, at least, *Western* human thought. We categorize and classify, and this allows us to make necessary distinctions, for instance, between *justification* and *sanctification*. It enables us to see the divinity in the Father, and the divinity in the Son, and the divinity in the Holy Spirit - along with their distinct personhood - while at the same time adhering to the unity of the Godhead, and thus developing the doctrine of the Trinity. Man's ability to classify is a significant facet of his superior rational powers over the beasts.

Yet there is the danger that we forget to put the things we have separated back together again. Thus, while it is impossible for us to bounce back and forth between disciplines within Systematics and still derive a coherent doctrine, we must also keep in mind the interrelated nature of each branch of Systematic Theology. While it is true that Man finds his meaning in God, it is equally true that God finds His reflection in Man. This is not to say - in the least - that God's glory is in any way dependent upon Man; but rather to recognize the profound truth that God *caused* His image to be in

⁶ *Ibid.*; 39.

Man, and in no other creature. *“What is Man, that Thou art mindful of him; the Son of Man, that Thou takest note of him?”*⁷

All of this is to say that when we study God, we are at the same time studying ourselves, and when we study ourselves, we at the same time formulate thoughts about God. John Laidlaw correctly states, “There has never been a theology which did not imply and implicitly base itself upon some philosophy of man.”⁸ False notions about God will produce false notions about Man, and vice versa. It can be established that the majority of heretical views concerning God derive from a faulty view of Man, for man often projects upon his mental construction of God nothing more than an extended and somewhat exalted view of himself. But when we gaze into the true revelation of God in Scripture, *“we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”*⁹

Psalm 8: What is Man?

The psalmist meditates on the enigma that is Man, an excellent place and attitude from which to begin a study of Man. The context of his famous question, couched within his contemplation of the earth and all it contains and of the angelic hosts (literally, *elohim*, ‘gods’), indicates that the emphasis should be on ‘Man,’ as in ‘What is *Man*, that Thou are mindful of him?’ But the emphasis could equally be placed on the copulative, ‘What *is* Man, that Thou art mindful of him?’ The first brings into focus the utter incongruity that Man should be an object of interest to the Almighty, the second a search for the reason of such interest. Both aspects will serve as guides to our study of Man: the Crux of Creation.

From the first perspective, ‘What is *Man*,’ we derive from the biblical record a conclusion completely at odds with the theory of Evolution. Man is indeed a small and insignificant creature, and not one whose survival – to say nothing of his complete dominion of the earth – could have been predicted by the rules of ‘natural selection.’

⁷ Psalm 8:4

⁸ Laidlaw, John *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark; 1895); 16.

⁹ II Corinthians 3:18

When one considers either the heavens or the earth - the uncontrollable powers of Nature on the one hand, or the insatiable appetite of the Animal Kingdom on the other - what is *Man*? The evolutionary theory of natural selection teaches primarily that incremental biological mutations are measured as to their success simply by their tendency to promote reproduction and survival. But Man must be viewed as an anomaly by any such standard. We are told that Man not only survived but reached the pinnacle of the animal order by virtue of his evolved intelligence; but how long could Man survive while until this intelligence evolved sufficiently to provide a defense mechanism against stronger, faster, and hungrier animals? Consider simply the weather - Man is ill-suited (pun intended) to survive in any climate without the aid of clothing; but we are told that he did survive through countless generations until he evolved the intelligence (and the motor skills) to sew. Did he maintain his thick furry mantle up to the time he learned to weave, and then shed it?

And the psalmist's wonder is by no means limited to the visible world: "*a little lower than the gods,*" was Man made. Even more so than when compared to Nature or the Animal Kingdom, *Man* appears miniscule when set against the forces of the invisible, spiritual realm. Of course, we are told, the psalmist lived in a superstitious age when men believed in such beings as angels and demons, but Man has evolved through that phase and now knows that the material world is all there is. Yet the reality, even within the highly evolved (read 'highly skeptical') Western world, is that the majority of people still believe in beings of supernatural and spiritual essence and power, compared to which Man is indeed a small creature. No matter how the matter is sliced, the question remains: 'What is *Man*?'

The preliminary answer to this question, at least as far as this study is concerned, will be the focus of the second lesson (at least): *Man: the Image of God*. While the psalmist does not incorporate the *Imago Dei* into his contemplation, there is no doubt that he acknowledges the once and future greatness of Man vis-à-vis the rest of God's created universe.

Man: The Crux of Creation

*Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!
You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet,
All sheep and oxen,
And also the beasts of the field,
The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea,
Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.* (Psalm 8:5-8)

The pious curiosity concerning Man poetically considered in Psalm 8 is properly bracketed by the first and last verses, which begin and end with the glory of God: “O Lord, our Lord, How majestic is Thy name in all the earth!” There is no cause for Man to become puffed up, or to think himself equal with God on account of his unique position relative to the rest of Creation. Yet, firmly within the safe confines of the all-encompassing glory of Jehovah, Man *is* unique; he is “the headstone of the temple of Creation.”¹⁰ The psalmist marveled at Man’s unlikely position within the created realm; the Apostle Paul would be granted the progressive revelation that Man *is himself* that temple, at least Man as he is summed up in the last Adam, Jesus Christ. Laidlaw writes, “The glory of God in man is brought out by man’s greatness in littleness. The excellence which the psalm ascribes to Jehovah’s name in all the earth, is that He should mirror Himself in such a one as man.”¹¹

The concept of Man created in the image of God dovetails with the previously discussed reciprocity between the revelation of God and of Man. God’s purpose, insofar as we can speak of God’s purpose, in creating Man in particular, was that this unique and singular creature would *reflect* the divine nature and glory to the rest of Creation. We may say that God *invested* Himself in Man, in a profoundly literal sense of that term: He created for Himself the only acceptable replication of the divine glory: Man. But in a further intensification of the conundrum, “*What is Man?*” this creature was foreordained to act according to his own free will, and to rebel and to corrupt that image in the presence of God, the angels, and all of Creation. Yet the *imago Dei* remains,

¹⁰ Heard, J. B. *The Tripartite Nature of Man: Spirit, Soul, and Body* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark; 1870); 40.

¹¹ Laidlaw; 147.

and the flow of special revelation more intricately weaves together, as it were, the 'fate' of God and that of Man. Scripture reveals to Man his own nature as it reveals God's nature, intertwined with human sin and redemptive history, "the knowledge of ourselves, and of the nature of God, go on proportionately together in the Scriptures."¹²

Just *what* comprises the *imago Dei* is subject to perennial debate; no consensus has developed either within Jewish rabbinic writings or Christian theologies. When one reads a particular viewpoint, the most common feeling afterward is that of insufficiency. The author makes a few good points of comparison between the nature of Man and the nature of God, or of the supremacy of Man over the irrational beast; but in the end the *imago Dei* remains undefined and mysterious. Still, we search, because eternity has been set within our hearts and we *must* search or lose ourselves in the neglect. We grow with what we discover, and grow ever more aware that there is much, much more to discover. There again is the reciprocity: for in learning about ourselves as the image-bearers of God, we learn about God, an infinite subject indeed. Our second lesson will delve into the history of interpretation regarding the *imago Dei*, and attempt to "*extract the precious from the vile*" in terms of formulating at least a working definition of what the term means.

The emphasis from the psalmist's philosophical question may also be laid upon the verb: 'What *is* Man?' Biblical Anthropology does not stop merely with investigating the nature of Man as created in the image of God; it moves forward to analyze the nature of Man in its discreet though indissoluble parts: *body, soul, spirit, flesh, heart, mind*, etc. What comprises this unique creature, so "*fearfully and wonderfully made*"? This investigation will occupy several, perhaps many, of the ensuing lessons as we seek to develop a biblical view of Man's composite, yet unitary, nature. This study then branches out into other pertinent topics, such as the nature of sin and its effects on Man, the meaning of death and the immortality of the soul, and the meaning and nature of the resurrection. The concept of a biblical view of Man as to his constitution will thus

¹² *Ibid.*; 20.

guide our study and help to formulate our Anthropology, as noted by Franz Delitzsch in his excellent work, *A System of Biblical Psychology*,

Thus conceived of, the matter of psychology divides itself into the following seven heads: 1. Eternal Presuppositions. 2. Creation and Propagation. 3. Fall. 4. Present Condition. 5. Regeneration. 6. Death and Intermediate State. 7. Resurrection and Perfection.¹³

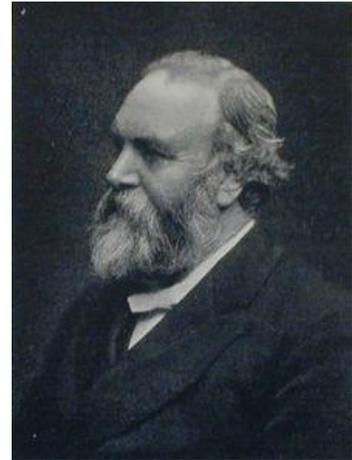
There is a primary assumption in this study, one that underlies the poetry of Psalm 8 – namely, that Man *is* a special creation of God. Implicit in this view is the denial in full of any evolutionary theory that would attempt to synthesize with the biblical doctrine of Man created in the image of God. While the biological relationships and categories of the animal and plant kingdoms are of little consequence to a biblical Anthropology, any notion that Man is the accidental result of arbitrary biological and chemical forces is absolutely incompatible with the teaching of Scripture with regard to human nature and responsibility. The doctrines of Christianity, and the hope of mankind, stand squarely upon the *imago Dei*; any alloy of evolution only weakens the foundation to its breaking point. Darwin once claimed that if it could be proven that some outside force or influence (i.e., God) intervened to either initiate or propagate the development of the species, then his theory would fall to the ground completely. The opposite may be said: if it could be proven that man was but the product of molecular mutations carried on arbitrarily through eons, then the entire foundation of Christian belief would be catastrophically undermined, and the whole of biblical revelation would fall to the ground utterly.

Man: The Crux of Creation:

Evolution presents us with an incredibly low view of Man; the Bible presents us with a remarkably high view – perhaps too high for our finite and fallen minds to appreciate fully. Man is the crux of Creation, the microcosm, as it were, of the entirety of God’s work in creating the universe. But a correct and biblical view of human nature

¹³ Delitzsch, Franz *A System of Biblical Psychology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark; 1867); 19.

is essential to a proper view of God (reciprocity, again) and of sin and salvation. James Orr, one of the premier Christian apologists of the 19th Century, comments that “the view we are led to form of man in his nature and origin inevitably reacts on our conceptions both of God and of sin, and through these, as well as more directly, affects our total view of Christianity.”¹⁴ This connection is, perhaps, not intuitive, even for Reformed theologians. We are trained from catechism on up to ascribe all glory to God, and rightfully so. But if Man is the image of God, then it stands to reason that a low view of man – or at least of human nature – cannot help but foster a low view of God. If we despise the image, we will despise the original. John puts it thus, “If someone says, “I love God,” and *hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.*”¹⁵



James Orr (1844-1913)

Whether intuitive or not, this phenomenon stirred the psalmist to wonder, “*You have created him a little lower (or, for a little while) than the angels...*” We are taught in Scripture that the angelic host consists of purely spiritual beings, though we are told next to nothing concerning their origin. On the other side of the created spectrum stand the materialistic: inanimate earth and animate life. Of these we are told God created them by *fiat* – He spoke, and they came into being. But of Man we read that he joins the two world: formed of the earth, animated by the breath (also ‘spirit’) of God. “While man is linked on the lower side of his being with organic nature, and in a manner, physiologically and otherwise, sums it up in himself, and is the microcosm of it, he not less clearly stands above nature – is in a true sense *supranatural* – and on this side of his being is linked with a higher *spiritual* order.”¹⁶

Man is thus placed – by the psalmist as well as by God in Creation – in the middle of all things; the created center of the universe. “*You made him to rule over the*

¹⁴ Orr, *James God’s Image in Man* (New York: Armstrong & Son; 1906); 9.

¹⁵ I John 4:20

¹⁶ Orr; 41.

works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet." Perhaps it was in light of this psalm that Paul later informs the Corinthians that believers will some day judge angels (I Cor. 6:3). Remembering, again, the crucial brackets of divine glory in verses 1 & 9 of Psalm 8, we are led to marvel at the expressed plan of God that this glory due to Him alone will be mediated in and shared by His image, Man. Only Man stands in both the material and the spiritual realms of God's cosmos, "within the lower, this-worldly sphere appropriate to him, and confronted by the higher, transcendent sphere which forms its limit."¹⁷

Man's position in the cosmos also makes him uniquely able to communicate with God – not, to be sure, through self-directed and self-motivated initiative, but rather as the receiver of divine revelation. God has made Man in the divine image, and Man as a result is capable of 'hearing' the divine Word, "in man God created the real counterpart to whom He could reveal himself."¹⁸ James Henley Thornwell writes of Man,

That man is the centre in which, so far as this lower world is concerned, all the lines of creation converge and meet, that he is the crowning glory of God's sublunary workmanship, is evident alike from the peculiarities of his being and from the inspired history of his production. He unites in himself the two great divisions of the creature – persons and things; he is at once subject and object, mind and matter, nature and spirit. He has elements which work under the blind and necessitating influence of law – which enter into the chain of causes and effects extending through all the impersonal universe; he has elements which mark the intelligent and responsible agent, which separate him from the whole sphere of mechanical agencies, and stamp him with the dignity and the high prerogative of intelligence and freedom. All the forms of life which are distributed among other creatures are concentrated in him.¹⁹

This is Man, the one in whom "heaven and earth are together in this fixed order; because man is and represents the secret of the creature."²⁰ But even as we have been rehearsing the litany of human dignity, both from Psalm 8 and from various theologians, our minds move beyond ourselves as individuals – surely no one with

¹⁷ Barth, Karl *Church Dogmatics: The Doctrine of Creation III.2* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark; 1960); 14.

¹⁸ Barth *Creation III.1*; 194.

¹⁹ Thornwell; 223.

²⁰ Barth *Dogmatics III.1*; 18.

sober judgment takes to himself such accolades – and beyond ourselves as a race – just as surely mankind collectively has never lived up to such high billing. No, our minds move to the Man in whom humanity is consummated in perfection, in whom we can say irrefutably that the entire universe comes together as unity: Jesus Christ, the God-Man. Just as God cannot be studied in abstraction from Man, nor Man in solitude apart from God, so also Man cannot be properly assessed apart from the eternal intention of the Godhead to reveal “*the fullness of deity*” – in a *body*; in a *man* – through the incarnation. Again we find this theme in the poetry of Israel, at least in the Greek translation,

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not; but a body hast thou prepared me: whole-burnt-offering and sacrifice for sin thou didst not require. Then I said, Behold, I come: in the volume of the book it is written concerning me, I desired to do thy will, O my God, and thy law in the midst of mine heart.

(Psalm 40:6-8 LXX)

This passage is quoted by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, within the context of the incarnation, *Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says...*” followed by this reference from Psalm 40. But the ‘*body prepared*’ was from eternity past, in the hallowed counsel of the Godhead, in the ‘covenant of redemption’ made between the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit before the foundation of the earth. That body was the pattern after which the first Adam was formed, foreshadowing the body that the last Adam would take upon himself to fully and finally bring to completion all that Man was meant to be. So, just as our thoughts are bracketed in Psalm 8 with praise to Almighty God – “*Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name in all the earth!*” – so our biblical anthropology is bracketed between divine glory and divine glory. One the one hand, and for all his dignity and uniqueness, Man is but the *image* of God; he is not himself divine. And on the other hand, in spite of mankind’s utter failure to ‘live up’ to his calling, his alone is the form taken into the Godhead through the incarnation,

Man: The Crux of Creation

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

(Philippians 2:6-7)

This summing up of all that pertains to Man in Jesus Christ resonates with the author of Hebrews exaltation of Christ in His supreme humanity. After quoting from Psalm 8 – our focus passage in this lesson – the preacher to the Hebrews says,

But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

(Hebrews 2:9-11)

For this reason it is dangerous to develop too low a view of Man – not because Man deserves high praise, which he most certainly does not – but for the dual nature of his origin and destiny. Created in the image of God, Man is the center of the cosmos, “the headstone of the temple of creation.” That is Man’s origin. His destiny at Creation was to have his form – his entire humanity – taken up by the Son of God into a mystical union with deity, as the firstfruits of those who, in Christ, will one day share in that full and perfected humanity.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

(I John 3:2)

Session 2: **The *Imago Dei***

Scripture Text: **Genesis 1:26-27**

*“Subjectivity is not just inevitable;
it is constitutive of the hermeneutical enterprise.
One can see nothing without standing in a particular place.”
(J. Richard Middleton)*

A well-known Jewish scholar of the 20th Century took Christian theologians to task in regard to their handling of the Bible, claiming that while these theologians purported to value the Bible as God’s infallible Word, they tended to exegete it like pagans. The point Abraham Heschel was making was the tendency of Christian theo-



Abraham Heschel (1907-72)

logians and commentators to incorporate philosophical *a priori* into their interpretation and application of biblical texts. “The great challenge to those of us who take the Bible seriously is to let it teach us its own essential categories; and then for us to think *with* them, instead of just *about* them.”²¹ Considering the fact that Heschel remained an unconverted, though orthodox, Jew his entire life – and ardently maintained multiple paths to God and Truth – one has to conclude that his exegesis of the

Bible was not without its problems, too. Still, what he has to say is good, and important, especially when we come to a concept as vaguely defined in Scripture as the *Imago Dei* – the image of God in which Man was first created. There is little doubt that the various interpretations and definitions given to this enigmatic phrase over the millennia, have been colored by the philosophical perspective of the individual theologian – whether Jewish or Christian – one happens to be reading. It is indeed a challenge for us to allow Scripture itself to set the category or categories from which we may learn what the *Bible* means by the phrase, rather than to impose upon it metaphysical or philosophical categories that prevail in our time.

²¹ Abraham Heschel; quoted by J. Richard Middleton; *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press; 2005); 33.

This being said, it should also be noted that Middleton's own contribution to the discussion, quoted in the chapter heading above, is as valuable an insight as is Heschel's. God is sovereign over the entire universe – time, as well as space. This means that the subjective philosophical categories from which theologians reason in any given age are well known to Him, having been ordained by Him from before the foundation of the world. If biblical categories are indeed inspired, which we ardently believe they are, then the truth within them may be discovered through the paradigm of thought prevalent in any and every age. To be sure, no single age will be capable of encompassing the entire truth contained in even such a short phrase as the *imago Dei*, but the composite whole throughout the ages may be expected to provide increasing light to subsequent generations.

Therefore one avenue of study we will pursue with regard to the concept of Man created in the image of God, is to study what has been said of it *historically*. This line of inquiry is based on the fact that Man *is* the image of God, and has been throughout the ages. Therefore his own reflections on the phrase – as it applies to himself – offers to be a very interesting study in itself, and perhaps even enlightening. In addition, researching the historical interpretative flow of the *imago Dei* will touch upon that equally enigmatic statement in Ecclesiastes, “*God has set eternity in the heart of every man...*” Man, as the image of God, cannot help but contemplate upon the fact. It is to be hoped, and should be expected, that those who stand in the religious tradition of biblical revelation will be found to contemplate upon the *imago Dei* in a particularly *biblical* manner.

Another path of inquiry will be more obvious to most students of the Bible: we will pursue the meaning of the phrase *exegetically*. An initial caveat is necessary, however, due to the fact that there are only a few passages in Scripture that bear directly upon an exegetical study, and they are not extremely forthcoming with data. Indeed, one can argue that there would be much less to study *historically* if we had more to go on *exegetically*. This investigation will include the ubiquitous *word study* with regard to the two words used in Genesis 1:26, *image* and *likeness*, with the goal of

determining whether the couplet is essentially synonymous or significant of different meanings.

The passages that do speak of the *image* or *likeness* do not do so in the same context or to the same purpose. Therefore the exegetical study will itself branch off into three branches of inquiry concerning the *ontological*, the *relational*, and the *functional* aspects of the phrase *imago Dei*. This summary of the biblical data will bring us full circle, as it will of necessity incorporate various strands of thought from the *historical* study, in an attempt to formulate a composite, biblical understanding of the concept. There is no *a priori* claim to exhaustiveness or ultimate conclusiveness concerning a concept and a phrase fraught with meaning, yet largely a riddle to the one who bears it: Man. We will add to the mix the various opinions held over the years as to whether the *image* was entirely lost when Adam fell, or only deranged and corrupted. Finally, there is the necessary discussion as to the impact of regeneration upon the image, as obliquely mentioned by the Apostle Paul in several of his epistles. The *imago Dei* is a vast topic; we can only hope to provide a reasonable overview and summary that may guide us toward future study.

Historical Study:

The logical place to begin a historical study of the interpretation of the *imago Dei* in Genesis 1:26 is with Jewish rabbinic writings. This we will do. However, it must be noted that the majority of rabbinic writings that we have ready to hand date from *during* the Christian era, generally from the Middle Ages or later, and betray no less an influence of Platonic and/or Aristotelian philosophy as their Christian counterparts. One of the earliest Jewish commentary on the passage is from the *Bereshith*, or *Genesis Rabba*, which dates from between AD 200 and 500. This document is a *midrash*, which is a form of Jewish biblical interpretation common to the post-Temple period. Midrashic commentaries are often in the form of running comment blended in with the biblical passage, frequently interposing storylines supplementary to the text itself (and very

often highly imaginative in themselves). For instance, the *Bereshith* contains the following at Genesis 1:26,

Then God said, "Let us make man in our likeness, and let there be a creature not only the product of earth, but also gifted with heavenly, spiritual elements, which will bestow on him reason, intellect, and understanding." Truth then appeared, falling before God's throne, and in all humility exclaimed: "Deign, O God, to refrain from calling into being a creature who is beset with the vice of lying, who will tread truth under his feet." Peace came forth to support this petition. "Wherefore, O lord, shall this creature appear on earth, a creature so full of strife and contention, to disturb the peace and harmony of thy creation? He will carry the flame of quarrel and ill-will in his trail; he will bring about war and destruction in his eagerness for gain and conquest."

Whilst they were pleading against the creation of man, there was heard, arising from another part of the heavens, the soft voice of Charity: "Sovereign of the universe." the voice exclaimed, in all its mildness, "vouchsafe thou to create a being in thy, likeness, for it will be a noble creature striving to imitate thy attributes by its actions. I see man now in Spirit, that being with God's breath in his nostrils, seeking to perform his great mission, to do his noble work. I see him now in spirit, approaching the humble hut, seeking out those who are distressed and wretched to comfort them, drying the tears of the afflicted and despondent, raising up them that are bowed down in spirit, reaching his helping hand to those who are in need of help, speaking peace to the heart of the widow, and giving shelter to the fatherless. Such a creature can not fail to be a glory to his Maker." The Creator approved of the pleadings of Charity, called man into being, and cast Truth down to the earth to flourish there; as the Psalmist says (Ps. lxxxv. 12): "Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven to abide with man"; and he dignified Truth by making her his own seal.²²

This is an example of the vivid, narrative-enhanced commentary frequently encountered among the rabbins, where a great deal of back-story (the conflict between Truth and Charity in heaven over the creation of Man) is incorporated into the biblical story itself. The biblical narrative was, however, taken perhaps even more seriously via this methodology than the analytical, lexical, and logical hermeneutic common to Western Christianity. The rabbinic midrashes generally took the biblical text at face value, and then incorporated theological considerations from the rest of Scripture into a revamped narrative such as the above. Another instance of the analysis of Man as the

²² The Bereshith, or 'Genesis Rabba' <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/mhl/mhl05.htm>

highest specimen of God's Creation is found in the Talmud, somewhat of a systematic collection of rabbinic teachings over the ages. In one Talmudic passage the distinction between man and the rest of creation is highlighted under a discussion of the *imago Dei*,

All creatures which are formed from heaven, both their soul and body are from heaven; and all creatures which are formed from earth, both their soul and body are from earth, with the exception of man whose soul is from heaven and his body from earth. Therefore, if a man obeys the Torah and does the will of his Father in heaven, behold he is like the creature above; as it is written, 'I said, Ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High.' But if he obey not the Torah and perform not the will of his Father in heaven, he is like the creatures below; as it is said, 'Nevertheless ye shall die like man.'²³

The *difference* between Man as created in the image of God, on the one hand, and both the higher and lower forms of creation, on the other, is a major theme in the rabbinic commentary. Yet there is not a great deal of light shed on the concept of the *imago Dei* itself, as one frequently encounters imaginative interpolations not unlike medieval Christian scholasticism,

In four respects man resembles the creatures above, and in four respects the creatures below. Like the animals he eats and drinks, propagates his species, relieves himself and dies. Like the ministering angels he stands erect, speaks, possesses intellect, and sees.²⁴

Later, medieval rabbinism imbibed the influences of Aristotle that were pervading Christian Europe and massively impacting Catholic scholarship in the era of Thomas Aquinas. Perhaps the most famous Jewish scholar of that time was Moses Maimonides, a Sephardic Jewish philosopher and astronomer, as well as a renowned Torah scholar in his own time. Maimonides repudiated the emphasis placed by earlier rabbinism on the *physical*



Maimonides (1135-1204)

²³ Quoted from Sifré Deuteronomy, in A. Cohen *Everyman's Talmud* (New York: Schocken Books; 1975); 67-68.

²⁴ *Idem.*; One might suggest an Oxford comma immediately following 'relieves himself,' but there is none in the original.

aspect of the image, which is actually more in keeping with the meaning of the words used in Genesis 1:26, *image* and *likeness*. Maimonides, incorporating both Platonic and Aristotelian philosophical disdain for the body in favor of the immaterial spirit, fell in step with his Christian counterparts in the Middle Ages in locating the 'image' solely within the *rational power* of Man versus the beasts. "The excellent knowledge (or reason) that is found in the soul of man, it is the form of man: and for this form it is said, Let us make man in our image."²⁵ The use of the word 'form' by Maimonides draws from the philosophical meaning assigned to it during the heyday of Greek philosophy, the era of Plato and Aristotle. Thus, in spite of the fact that the biblical usage of the words found in Genesis 1:26, this medieval rabbi found *no* facet of the divine image in Man associated with corporeality, with the possession of a body. This conclusion placed Maimonides at odds with many generations of ancient rabbinic teaching, but squarely in line with the resurgent Aristotelianism of his own day.

Some have been of opinion that by the Hebrew *zelem*, the shape and figure of a thing is to be understood, and this explanation led men to believe in the corporeality [of the Divine Being]: for they thought that the words "Let us make man in our *zelem*" (Gen. i. 26), implied that God had the form of a human being, i.e., that He had figure and shape, and that, consequently, He was corporeal. They adhered faithfully to this view, and thought that if they were to relinquish it they would *eo ipso* reject the truth of the Bible: and further, if they did not conceive God as having a body possessed of face and limbs, similar to their own in appearance, they would have to deny even the existence of God. The sole difference which they admitted, was that He excelled in greatness and splendour, and that His substance was not flesh and blood. Thus far went their conception of the greatness and glory of God. The incorporeality of the Divine Being, and His unity, in the true sense of the word--for there is no real unity without incorporeality--will be fully proved in the course of the present treatise.²⁶

Current Jewish scholarly comment on the 'image of God' paradigm is distinctly more post-modern than medieval, and categories of form and body and soul are largely passed over in favor of a broader, universalistic terms. For instance, Abraham Heschel,

²⁵ Maimonides; quoted by Henry Ainsworth, *Annotations on the Pentateuch and the Psalms* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications; 1991); 8.

²⁶ Maimonides, *Guide to the Perplexed*; <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/gfp/gfp011.htm> Accessed 5/24/16.

introduced above, has this to say about the image of God during the Civil Rights era in 1960s America, "God is every man's pedigree. He is either the Father of all men or of no man. The image of God is either in every man or in no man."²⁷

Early Church Fathers:

The medieval view of Maimonides differed very little from the view held by the post-apostolic Fathers of the early Christian Church, the major difference being Maimonides' preference for Aristotle versus the influence of Plato on the Fathers. The net result was essentially the same: that the image of God in Man consisted primarily, if not solely, in man's rational powers. Justin Martyr (*d.* AD 165) writes, "When he [God] created man, he endued him with the sense of understanding, of choosing the truth, and of doing right."²⁸ But the most significant contribution among the Fathers was that of Irenaeus, who posited a distinction of meaning between the two words used in Genesis 1:26 – *image* and *likeness*. "He defined the former as the endowment of a rational mind and a free will retained after the Fall, and the latter as the gratuitous life of the Spirit lost at Eden but restored by grace."²⁹ This view laid the groundwork for later developments within Roman Catholic theology of the *donum superadditum* – the 'superadded' gift of righteousness that was allegedly given to Adam at creation, lost at the Fall, and restored via the ordinance of baptism. This teaching is significant for later study, as it posits the situation that Adam was not created 'righteous,' but rather morally neutral except for the additional 'gift' of righteousness granted by God's Spirit prior to the Fall.

This distinction between the two Hebrew words in Genesis 1:26 afforded the early Church writers with a way of dealing with the Fall: by assigning the righteousness of Adam to a supernatural gift located in the 'likeness,' they could simply explain that *this* was what was lost in the Fall, leaving man in a 'state of Nature' without the aid of

²⁷ Heschel, Abraham Joshua, "Religion and Race" *Voices of Democracy*, from 14 January 1963. <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/heschel-religion-and-race-speech-text/>

²⁸ Justin Martyr *Apology*; quoted by Gordon R. Lewis & Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House; 1996); II.124.

²⁹ *Idem.*

grace. But it is hard to see just how fallen Man differs at this point from the beast or how, having lost the aspect of righteousness and returned to a morally neutral natural condition, he can still be held accountable for his sin. Roman Catholic anthropology has never successfully closed these holes.

Medieval & Reformation Views:

Medieval Roman Catholic views on the *imago Dei*, led by the premier scholar of the age, Thomas Aquinas, basically held the two-tiered distinction between *image* and *likeness*, with a practical emphasis on the role of the sacraments for restoring and sustaining the latter. Of necessity, later Roman Catholic doctrine moved away from the *image* signifying merely natural man, essentially devoid of moral capacity, toward a more general sense in which all men possess a 'natural' capacity for virtue and for understanding and loving God. This modification of the earlier scheme was not through biblical research, but rather as a means to exercise moral authority over men through the Church, which was a key theme in Thomistic writings.

During the Reformation the two-tiered distinction was abandoned along with most of Aquinas' teachings, in favor of the more Augustinian (and more Platonic) view of the image of God consisting in the soul of man, manifested primarily in the intellect and will. Augustine's simple definition was paradigmatic for Luther and Calvin, "Thus God made man in his own image, by creating for him a soul of such a kind that because of it he surpassed all living creatures, on earth, in the sea, and in the sky, in virtue of reason and intelligence, for no other creature had a mind like that."³⁰ Calvin refrained from completely dismissing the human body from all discussion with regard to the *imago Dei*, though he, too, emphasized the immaterial aspect of human nature as being the primary or essential characteristic of the 'image.' He writes,

For although God's glory shines forth in the outer man, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul. I do not deny, indeed, that our outward form, in so far as it distinguishes and separates us from brute animals, at the same time more

³⁰ Augustine *The City of God* (London: Penguin Books; 1984); 503.

closely joins us to God. And if anyone wishes to include under 'image of God' the fact that, 'while all other living things being bent over look earthward, man has been given a face uplifted, bidden to gaze heavenward and to raise his countenance to the stars,' I shall not contend too strongly – provided it be regarded as a settled principle that the image of God, which is seen or glows in these outward marks, is spiritual.³¹

Calvin's meditations, however, do not betray a slavish dependence on Platonic or Aristotelian philosophy (though he clearly favored Plato among the Greeks); nor do they betray any *a priori* denigration of the body as one would find among the Greek philosophers. Rather, the Genevan Reformer focuses his attention on deriving the initial meaning of the 'image' through a study of the renewal of that image through regeneration in Christ Jesus. He thus extrapolates backward from Paul's discussion of the renewed man, to what the first-created man must have been like, noting that the apostle uses the terminology of Genesis 1:26 in discussing the process of regeneration and sanctification in Christ (*cp.* Col. 3:10 and Eph. 4:24).

Now we are to see what Paul chiefly comprehends under this renewal. In the first place he posits knowledge, then pure righteousness and holiness. From this we infer that, to begin with, God's image was visible in the light of the mind, in the uprightness of the heart, and in the soundness of all the parts.³²



James Henley Thornwell
(1812-62)

Calvin, of course, set the tone for subsequent generations of Reformed theologians, and the idea the renewed mind and sanctified spirit – the whole soul brought into unified conformity with the image of Christ – becomes the central theme within Reformed anthropologies. James Henley Thornwell, a principal example of Southern Presbyterian theologians in the 19th Century, follows the lines set down by Calvin. Henley writes, "His distinguishing characteristics as man may be summed up in the

³¹ Calvin, John *Institutes*; I.XV.3.

³² *Ibid.* I.XV.4.

attributes of reason and of will, or intelligence and freedom."³³ Although it might not be obvious, due to the terminology employed, Thornwell's *reason* corresponds to Calvin's *light of the mind*, while Thornwell's *will* to Calvin's *uprightness of heart*. Later in the same lecture, Thornwell brings in the last part of Calvin's *trifecta*, "His [i.e., man's] primitive state is represented as a state of integrity, in which every part of his constitution was adapted to the end for which he was created."³⁴

One of the more interesting 'controversies' within classical Reformed scholarship has to do with what became of the *imago Dei* when Adam fell. Calvin is unequivocal in affirming that the 'image' remained in Man, though seriously deranged and corrupted. "Therefore, even though we grant that God's image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in him, yet it was so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity...Now God's image is the perfect excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before his defection, but was subsequently so vitiated and almost blotted out that nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, and disease-ridden."³⁵ Robert Louis Dabney, a contemporary of Thornwell and an equally staunch Calvinist of that era, makes a remarkable statement concerning the loss of the *image* as a result of the Fall.

The general idea here [i.e., Genesis 1:26] is obviously, that there is a resemblance of man to God. It is not in sameness of essence, for God's is incommunicable; not likeness of corporeal shape, for of this God has none...*This image has been lost, in the fall, and regained in redemption.* Hence, it could not have consisted in anything absolutely essential to man's essence, because the loss of such an attribute would have destroyed man's nature.³⁶

This is a remarkable statement, an unusual departure by Dabney from an otherwise solid Calvinistic theology. His premise, undefended, is that the *imago Dei* was not merely corrupted horribly by the fall – as Calvin maintains – but was *lost*

³³ Thornwell; 225.

³⁴ *Ibid.*; 235.

³⁵ Calvin, I.XV.4.

³⁶ Dabney, R. L. *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth; 1996); 293. Italics added.

completely. Of necessity, therefore, he must then deny that the *imago Dei* was of the essence of human nature, for its loss would render Man no longer Man. One must allow this conclusion to sink in a bit, in order to appreciate its ramifications. At the moment of his creation, it is written of Man, “Let Us make Man in Our image, according to Our likeness...” With nothing else yet said concerning Man, we are told that he will bear – and will be – the *image of God*. Can anything be considered *more* essential than this to human nature? Dabney confirms that this first quotation is not a misunderstanding of his position, as he later states, “But since the fall, man has lost his original righteousness, and his likeness to God consists only in his possession of an intelligent spiritual nature.”³⁷ Perhaps Dabney is holding to the same dichotomy between ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ proposed by Irenaeus, wherein the ‘image’ is lost through the fall, and the ‘likeness’ remains a mere shadow of God in the intellectual attribute of Man. In any event, Dabney’s view is unbiblical and unsound. Far more orthodox and biblical is the succinct statement from John Laidlaw, “the divine image is the inalienable property of the race.”³⁸ We will have further occasion to discuss the impact of the fall upon Man’s nature, and upon the ‘image,’ later in this study.

Modern & Neo-Orthodox Views:

Moving into the 20th Century, when the influence of Enlightenment philosophy and the teachings of Kant, Hegel, and Schleiermacher was becoming dominant in European theological circles, the very historicity of the Creation event was called into question. In an attempt to salvage a form of Christianity from the debris of ‘higher criticism’ and evolutionary unbelief, theologians jettisoned concepts of the *imago Dei* that went much beyond mere metaphor. It was widely accepted among Christian theologians that Man was nothing more than a highly evolved animal, without any unique claim to the divine image, except in the sense that Man was *the* dominant evolved animal on earth. Even within orthodox teaching, such as that of the 19th

³⁷ Dabney; 294.

³⁸ Laidlaw; 144.

Century Lutheran scholar Franz Delitzsch, the *imago Dei* took on more ‘relational’ perspective, as opposed to a ‘formational’ one. Delitzsch writes,

Thus man shown forth even in the image of God, which before the fall was like, afterward unlike. The likeness of the image was, that his spirit beamed with love, or that it was light, love, and spirit, as God is...This light perished in the fall, and man died with death...The fallen Adam indeed retained his essence, and that a living one, but dead in respect of the perfection of his position. Hence Adam died. What life was left to him in life, was a dead life.³⁹

This relational perspective was intensified among the neo-orthodox theologians of the early and middle 20th Century. Foremost among them was Karl Barth, who incorporated Martin Buber’s philosophy of ‘I-Thou’ into what he conceived as the essential meaning of the ‘image’ in Genesis 1:26-27. Barth notes that both verses center, as it were, upon a relationship. In verse 26 that relationship is the ‘Us’ of the Godhead (Barth neither defends nor denies an allusion to the Trinity here)⁴⁰, while the relational note in verse 27 is the fact that God made Man ‘male and female’ in the day He made him. This is an important contribution to the study, for it does as Heschel counseled earlier in this lesson: it allows the passage to speak, to set up its own categories, consequently forcing us to think *with* the passage rather than *about* it. Thus Barth recognizes that “in man God created the real counterpart to whom He could reveal Himself.”⁴¹ On the mundane level, the distinction of male and female – we must note that there is no distinction of the *imago Dei* here – teaches a corresponding relationship between man (Hebrew *ish*) and *his* unique counterpart, woman (Hebrew *isha*).

Summary of History of the *Imago Dei*:

Gerhard von Rad notes at the beginning of his discussion of the ‘image of God’ in Man, “The statement about the image of God in man contains no direct explanation about the form which specially constitutes it; its real point is rather in the purpose for

³⁹ Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*; 31.

⁴⁰ Barth, Karl *Church Dogmatics III.1.192*.

⁴¹ *Ibid*; 194.

which the image is given to man."⁴² While we will have occasion to disagree with the absoluteness of his conclusion, it is hard to argue with his premise: there really is very little in the key passage – Genesis 1:26-27 – that offers explanation as to the form of the *imago Dei* in Man. Thus the variegated history. If this journey through Jewish and Christian thought on the 'image' provided no ultimate light, it is largely because the path has mostly been very dark indeed. God may well say of each theologian and rabbi who attempted to definitively state the meaning of the 'image,' "*Who is this who darkens counsel, with words without knowledge?*"⁴³

Still, the errors contained in the various views are often errors of imbalance rather than errors of utter falsehood. Within orthodox Christian theology, as within Jewish rabbinic teachings prior and at the same time, the complete denigration of the body was generally avoided. Furthermore, the struggle was a common one even though the outcome was often very different. This struggle is at the foundation of the issue: How can corporeal Man be the image of the invisible God? Early Jewish rabbinic teaching refuses to 'solve' the mystery, choosing instead to take the Scripture at face value and to speak of the 'image' in terms of Man's corporeal form; his body. As we will see in the word study portion (next lesson), the terms used in Genesis 1:26 strongly conjure a *material* image rather than a *spiritual* one.

But the equally clear teaching of Scripture is that God is Spirit, and that He possesses no form by which He may be seen. In an effort, perhaps at times even unconscious, to preserve the invisibility of the Godhead, Jewish philosophy and Christian anthropology moved *away* from the material aspect of Man as comprising *any* portion of the *imago Dei*. For whatever reason and whatever motive, however, this movement was *away* from the text of Genesis 1:26. And such retrograde movement opened rabbinic and Christian thought on the subject to the influences of the prevailing philosophies of any given era. Thus Plato was folded into first Jewish, then Christian anthropology, to be displaced later by Aristotle and, still later, by Kant and Hegel. In

⁴² Von Rad, Gerhard *Old Testament Theology: Volume 1* (New York: Harper & Row; 1962); 144.

⁴³ Job 38:2

surveying the field, one must concur with Barth's assessment, "We might easily discuss which of these and the many other similar explanations is the finest or most serious. What we cannot discuss is which of them is the true explanation of Gen. 1:26."⁴⁴

Can a physical body be a revelation of a spiritual one? Can the corporeal form of Man be the 'image' of the invisible, immaterial God? Is this even germane to the discussion of Genesis 1:26, or is the meaning to be found solely in Man's *purpose* on earth? It would be presumptuous to say that these questions will be answered definitively in our continuing study, as we look into the words used in the passage, and into the context of the passage as well as the balance of Scripture. But the flow of anthropological study has been decidedly in the opposite direction from what the text says, as it makes double reference to Man as being in some sense – and clearly a most important sense – the physical image of God on earth.

Perhaps we can best prepare ourselves for the next lesson, in which the two words translated 'image' and 'likeness' will be investigated, by recalling to mind another passage where a very material object, Creation, is said to be the revelation of a very immaterial being, God. *How* it is so may well be beyond our finite minds to comprehend; *that* it is so requires simply that we accept the biblical report.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

(Romans 1:19-20)

⁴⁴ Barth, *Dogmatics* III.I.193.

Session 3: Exegesis of Genesis 1:26-27

Scripture Text: Genesis 1:26-27

*“Man alone is possessed of both spirit and body.
He is, therefore, the link which binds together
the world of spirit and that of matter.”*
(James P. Boyce)

The history of interpretation of the *imago Dei* is, as we have seen, a history of the philosophy of Man, by men. Among orthodox biblical scholars the *desire* has been present to adhere to the teaching of Scripture, but the conclusions arrived at have rarely been derived from the text. This is not to say that such conclusions have been worthless; far from it, actually, as the study of the *imago Dei*, being the study of man by man, has produced accurate and interesting discoveries about human nature. It is just that none of the theories offered concerning the *meaning* of the divine image have been notably *biblical*; none of them have presented anything close to an exhaustive exegesis of the text. Again we are reminded of Barth’s pithy comment, “We might easily discuss which of these and the many other similar explanations is the finest or most serious. What we cannot discuss is which of them is the true explanation of Gen. 1:26.”

Of course, to say that those who have gone before have done so without the aid of the primary text on the subject, Genesis 1:26-27, sounds quite arrogant and sets oneself up for a mighty fall. It is best to equivocate at the start, rather than to set expectations too high. We agree with Laidlaw that “There never has been a theology which did not imply and implicitly base itself upon some philosophy of man.”⁴⁵ Therefore, this will be a study of Genesis 1:26-27, with the stated goal of discovering at least a working definition of the *imago Dei*. It does not purport to offer the final word on the matter, nor does it claim complete independence from historical research (as the copious citations should testify). Indeed, many of the authors who have written on the topic of the *imago Dei* have touched upon the points mentioned here, but usually to the exclusion of the other points. In short, this attempt is a compendium of the work of

⁴⁵ Laidlaw; 16.

others, consciously focusing on those insights that derive *from the text* and leaving out those that do not. Perhaps the best any scholar can offer on this score is approximation: to say that the *image of God consists in...* rather than to say that the *image of God is...*

Word Study:

We begin by addressing Irenaeus' division of the *imago Dei* based on the two words used in the text, translated in our English Bibles as 'image' and 'likeness.' The meanings of these two words are subtly different, but their usage in the various early passages concerning the *imago Dei* would argue against viewing them as anything other than functional synonyms. For instance, while both *tselem* ('image') and *dēmuth* ('likeness') are used in Genesis 1:26, only *tselem* is found – twice – in verse 27, and only *dēmuth* is found in Genesis 5:1.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image (tselem), according to Our likeness (dēmuth); and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Genesis 1:26)

God created man in His own image (tselem), in the image (tselem) of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:27)

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness (dēmuth) of God. (Genesis 5:1)

Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image (tselem) of God He made man. (Genesis 9:6)

This interchangeability of terms makes it very problematical when attempting to assign different features or aspects of the *imago* to the first or the second of the words. Usually the attempt seeks to divide between a 'higher' and a 'lower' sense of the concept, or between a 'natural' and a 'moral' distinction. But the difficulty here is further compounded by what the Scriptures say concerning the progeny of Adam, the first man,

When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness (d^emuth), according to his image (tselem), and named him Seth. (Genesis 5:2)

Adam was fallen by this time, so it is impossible to assign 'higher' or 'lower' characteristics to the *image* and *likeness* by which Seth is related to his father. Furthermore, as Seth is man born of man, rather than man created directly by God, it is also impossible to assign moral distinctions to the two terms as they relate to Seth. The study of the usage of the terms argues strongly for synonymous meanings, quite interchangeable within the context, at least as they pertain to the creation and propagation of Man. "Both words admit of a double usage, so that *tselem* can describe not only the representation but also the original reflected in it, its subject; and *d^emuth* not only the imitation, the copy, but also the prototype which lies behind it."⁴⁶ Laidlaw concludes that the use of two terms is, typical of Hebrew, a matter of emphasis,

This discourages the attempt of some ancient and modern writers to base important theoretical distinctions on the use of these words here. Especially futile is it to identify *Tselem* with the permanent, and *Demuth* with the perishable element in the divine image. The double expression belongs to the strength and emphasis with which the fact of man's creation in Godlikeness is set forth in this primal passage. Likeness added to the image tells that the divine image which man bears is one corresponding to the original pattern.⁴⁷

It remains important, however, to attempt a determination of what these words *mean* in and of themselves. Accepting them as essentially synonymous in the passages referring to the divine image and likeness of Man, what do the terms lead us to conclude as far as *what* that image comprises? The first of the words, *tselem* is the less commonly found of the two terms in the rest of the Old Testament, and beyond the passages listed above it invariably refers to an image in the sense of an *idol*; i.e., a physical image that serves as a replica of the original prototype. The Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint, translates the word *tselem* in Genesis 1:26 with *eikon*, the word from which we derive our English word *icon*. The second term, *d^emuth*, is found

⁴⁶ Barth, *Dogmatics III.1.197*.

⁴⁷ Laidlaw; 142-143.

twenty-five times in the Old Testament, in all cases denoting something *resembling* something else, as in a figure or model. The immediate sense of the two words, intensified by their being placed together, is that of a physical likeness or representation of God. This is remarkable, of course, as we are told in no uncertain terms that God is Spirit and possesses no bodily form. Yet that is what the text says. “The difficulty for us lies in the fact that the text regarded the simple statement that man was made in the image of God as adequate and clear.”⁴⁸

The words **תְּצַלֵּם** (*tselem*), ‘image,’ ‘statue,’ ‘a work of plastic art,’ and **דְּמוּת** (*dēmuth*), ‘likeness,’ ‘something like,’ – the second interprets the first by underlining the idea of correspondence and similarity – refer to the whole of man and do not relate solely to his spiritual and intellectual being: they relate equally, if not first and foremost, to the splendour of his bodily form.⁴⁹

A provisional conclusion, therefore, of the word study is that God intended Man to be a representation of Himself in bodily form. That this may be possible is rendered beyond question – at least to anyone who accepts the text of the Bible as divine revelation – as it is found supremely to be the case in the God-Man, Jesus Christ, in whom “*all the fullness of deity dwelt in bodily form*” and who is “*the exact representation of His nature*.”⁵⁰ Thus from the primary text on the *imago Dei*, Genesis 1:26, we may observe “that visibility and bodiliness may well be important for understanding the *imago Dei* and that this dimension of its meaning should not be summarily excluded from consideration.”⁵¹ Barth adds, “At any rate, the point of the text is that God willed to create man as a being corresponding to His own being – in such a way that He Himself...is the original and prototype, and man the copy and imitation.”⁵²

It must be reiterated that this is but a provisional observation concerning the meaning of *tselem* and *dēmuth* as they relate the being of Man to the being of God. Still,

⁴⁸ Von Rad; 144.

⁴⁹ *Idem*.

⁵⁰ Colossians 2:9 and Hebrews 1:3

⁵¹ Middleton; 25.

⁵² Barth; 197.

as a preliminary consideration it does have the advantage of taking the text at face value, as well as the corroborating evidence of those passages referred to concerning the *bodily* manifestation of the Godhead in Jesus Christ. However, the predominant interpretation among later Jewish and almost all Christian scholars is to depreciate the physical aspect, if not to deny that the human body has any part in the *imago Dei* at all. H. C. Leupold, a Lutheran scholar, quotes the denomination's founder on this matter, "Luther says, 'I understand the image of God to be...that Adam not only knew God and believed in Him that He was gracious; but that he also led an entirely godly life.'"⁵³

The tendency of Reformation theologians to emphasize the spiritual aspect of the *imago Dei* arises due to what several New Testament passages have to say about the *renewal* of that image in those who are regenerate in Christ. Under the rubric that 'Scripture explains Scripture,' an entirely valid hermeneutical concept, these authors point to verses such as Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 to 'show' what the original *imago Dei* must have meant by what it now means to those who are being renewed by the Holy Spirit.

*...that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which **in the likeness of God** has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.* (Ephesians 4:22-24)

*Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to **the image of the One** who created him...* (Colossians 3:9-10)

These verses do indicate that the apostle viewed at least the restoration of the *imago* as having somewhat to do with the renewing of the mind and of the spirit. Thornwell calls these verses 'decisive' on the issue.⁵⁴ But it is dangerous to view what Paul says in these two epistles as representing his entire doctrine of the *imago Dei*. One must remember that, for Paul, the *resurrection of the body* was an equally important

⁵³ Leupold, H. C. *Exposition of Genesis; Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; 1942); 89.

⁵⁴ Thornwell; 236.

aspect of the totality of Man in Christ. His key passage on the resurrection is, of course, I Corinthians 15. And while the language there incorporates a powerful spirituality, the subject of the discourse is the resurrection of the *body*, a body that will be in the resurrection what the body of the glorified Lord is now.

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

(I Corinthians 15:42-49)

But we have succumbed to the common tendency, at least for a moment, of attempting to discover the meaning of Genesis 1:26 by looking elsewhere. While it is true that many biblical concepts are deepened and expanded from subsequent biblical teaching, it remains a sound hermeneutic to first attempt an understanding of the passage *within the passage itself* before moving farther afield. Therefore we stand by the provisional observation from Genesis 1:26 that the bodily element of Adam's creation is important to the overall phenomenon of the *imago Dei*. In just what way it is important remains to be (hopefully) seen.

Context, Context, Context:

We return, then, to Genesis 1:26-27, to see what more can be discovered from the primal text regarding the *imago Dei*. The next exegetical item that presents itself from the first verse of this couplet, is the parallelism between two 'let' clauses:

*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;
and let them rule...*

The proximity of the *let them rule* clause to the *let Us make* clause strongly indicates purpose: that the Divine Being was creating another being *in His own image* in

order to *set him as ruler* over the rest of Creation. This characteristic of the enigma that is Man is echoed in Psalm 8, as we have seen, and remains central to the mystery *What is Man?* But it seems inappropriate to conclude, with Leopold, that dominion over the rest of Creation is merely an ‘expression’ of the *imago Dei*, considering the evident parallelism here in verse 26. Leopold writes, “What follows is one direction in which the possession of the image of God on the part of man expresses itself – dominion over the earth.”⁵⁵ This is as if dominion were just one of many different expressions of the *imago Dei*, though it happens to be the one that is mentioned (apart from any other) here in the classic text concerning the *imago Dei*. It seems more accurate to the text to reason with Middleton,

On this reading, the *imago Dei* designates the royal office or calling of human beings as God’s representatives and agents in the world, granted authorized power to share in God’s rule or administration of the earth’s resources and creatures.⁵⁶

Reformed theologians tends to take this human agency very quickly in the direction of a *priesthood*, which in itself is not unwarranted, but perhaps a bit premature to the text. Thornwell, for instance, writes, “As thus deliberately made, thus strangely mingling heaven and earth, he is fitted to occupy a place in which he shall represent God to the creatures and the creatures to God.”⁵⁷ But the *priesthood* of Man is something yet to be revealed in the course of biblical history; at this point we are given the *kingship* of Man. No other characteristic of Adam is given here as justification for this elevation to rule over the rest of Creation – no mention made of Man’s superior intellect or his creative genius. The foundation of Man’s prerogative is solely the fact that he is the *imago Dei*, the image of the One who is the indisputable Ruler of Creation. “The divine likeness is man’s title to royalty on earth.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Leopold, *Genesis*; 91.

⁵⁶ Middleton, *Liberating Image*; 27.

⁵⁷ Thornwell; *Collected Writings: Vol. 1*; 224.

⁵⁸ Laidlaw; 147.

What is given to him – and it is to this that the passage refers – is the divine destiny and promise of this lordship. Among all the living creatures of land, air, and water, man is to have and will have the pre-eminence. For all his similarities and links with animals, he is not to be one animal with others, but is to have them all under himself – in correspondence with God’s relationship to all creatures. He and he alone, male and female, is to be the one ‘animal’ to whom God will reveal and entrust His own honour within creation, with whom, in the course of a special history which will not be that of any beast, he will make common cause, and from whose activity He will expect a definite recognition of Himself, the praise of His might and of His right.⁵⁹

Among modern Reformed scholars, this concept of Man as the cogent⁶⁰ of God in Creation – and of the abiding nature of this role – has been most profoundly taken up by Abraham Kuyper. Kuyper both taught and lived the doctrine of ‘Creation Mandate,’ in which Man in Adam was given authority over the whole earth, to administer, to subjugate, to nurture, and to, in a sense, redeem for the glory of God. Kuyper firmly believed that this Mandate did not expire with the Fall, but continues



Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920)

As the basis of all human life and dignity. However, he also and firmly believed that the Mandate has special application to the redeemed; that Christians have a unique responsibility to bring the world into subjection to both human and Christian obedience. “Kuyperian Christians typically assert human responsibility for transforming culture to God’s glory, and many ground this insight in a royal reading of the *imago Dei*.”⁶¹ What Middleton calls the ‘royal reading’ of the *imago Dei*, we may properly refer to as the **functional image**, or perhaps more technically as the **teleological image**: the *purpose* or *end* for which Man was made in the image of God.

This is an important facet of our understanding of the *imago Dei* as it derives from the initial text, Genesis 1:26. Furthermore, dominion is a recurring theme in

⁵⁹ Barth, *Dogmatics*; III.1.206.

⁶⁰ The term ‘cogent’ refers to one who rules alongside of and *in the presence of* another, whereas the more common ‘coregent’ refers to one who rules *in another’s absence*. Thus Man is God’s *cogent* inasmuch as he is to reign before God over Creation, and certainly not in God’s absence.

⁶¹ Middleton; 32.

Christology: the exalted Lord Jesus Christ is *King of kings and Lord of lords*, and *all authority in heaven and earth* has been given unto Him as the Last Adam.⁶² Christ's dominion over all things belongs to Him from eternity *as God*, but is given to Him on the merit of His obedience and sacrifice *as Man*. And it is as Man that such dominion properly belongs, *coram Deo* – before the presence of God.

Yet the **functional** or **teleological aspect** of the *imago Dei* cannot be of the essence of the phrase; Man was not created simply to rule. This facet of the *imago* corresponds to one of the mandates given to Adam in the Garden: “*subdue the earth*,” but that follows immediately upon “*be fruitful and multiply*.” The text in Genesis 1 moves quickly on from the functional or ‘royal’ reading of the *image* in verse 26 to a **relational aspect** in verse 27.

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

A great deal of misapplication of Scripture to the relationship between men and women might have been avoided (if not for man's fallen nature) if more attention had been given to this verse in Genesis 1. This comes before the formation of Eve out of the side of Adam, and is therefore more generic and fundamental in terms of the human race. Genesis 5:2 provides a significant commentary on Genesis 1:27 regarding the equality of the man and the woman in terms of the *imago Dei*,

*This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them **and named them Man** in the day when they were created.*

We will have separate occasion to investigate what the Bible has to say regarding the formation of the woman, and concerning the relationship of Adam to Eve and vice versa. The point to be discerned here is the *interrelatedness* of ‘Man’ – the singular name given to ‘male and female.’ This teaches that the concept of the *imago Dei* is by no

⁶² Cp. Matthew 28:18 with Daniel 7:13-14

means limited to Adam as the first man, but to *Adam*, the generic term that signifies 'red earth,' the substance from which Man was first formed. In other words, the *imago Dei* belongs to 'humanity' as a concept, and to every member of that genus as a particularization. Yet within this unity that is Man there is a relational aspect that derives from the very beginning: Man as comprising both male and female.

The relational perspective of the *imago Dei* has a twofold aspect in Genesis 1:26-27. First, there is the divine plural, "Let **US** make man in **Our** image..." Modern higher critics refuse to allow the possibility that this divine plural might indicate a plural nature within the Godhead, and prefer a consortium of creation involving God and the angels. This is problematic in that it makes Man a composite creature, an image of God and of the angels – as if the two groups are of equal nature as a prototype. The option of the 'royal plural' in Genesis 1:26 is also a non-starter, as this linguistic tendency does not date from such an ancient period as the first book of the Pentateuch. Therefore, while we may refrain from claiming the fullness of the Trinity taught in Genesis 1:26, we may still allow the passage its simple sense: that the notion of the Godhead includes an element of plurality.

Plurality implies interrelation; and a plurality in a unified divine Being must imply a mysterious union of multiple Persons – that which would later be formulated as the doctrine of the Trinity. Staying strictly within the text of Genesis 1:26-27, we cannot say much about this plurality, or about the manner in which Man reflects that plurality – except to say that the distinction between male and female touches upon it. Later biblical revelation, and later theological contemplation, will establish that the primary relationships within the Godhead consist of the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit as the intervening medium – if we may use such an inanimate term – of loving communication between the two. That Man is formed in the image of God – the representation or reflection – implies that this same sense of interrelatedness must also pertain to human nature.

Reformed theologians, following the lead of Augustine, tend to find similarities between the Triune God and Man to be within each individual human being, as

manifested in the human body, the human soul, and the human spirit. J. B. Heard categorically rejects such reasoning by analogy from the Trinity to humanity, stating, "The conclusion, then, we come to is, that the mystery of the Trinity stands by itself, and is not to be brought in to explain either how man consists of three natures in one, or of the relation of those natures to each other."⁶³

Genesis 1:26 presents us with the divine plural – without explanation – and thus with a ‘conversation’ within the Godhead. This, in itself, is relational. But the corresponding relation we find in the text is not that of a tripartite Man – body, soul, spirit (which is not to say that Man is not tripartite, only that this is not in the immediate text). Rather what we find is the relational dynamic within ‘Man’ – singularly named – as ‘male’ and ‘female.’ We have to wait til Genesis 2 before we can begin to surmise about the constitution of the individual man; the nature of his composition as dual – body and spirit/soul – or tripartite – body, soul, and spirit. Here in Genesis 1:26-27, however, we are nonetheless presented with a powerful relational aspect to the *imago Dei*, in terms so closely related as to defy neglect:

God created man in His own image,
in the image of God He created him,
male and female He created them.

Notice the correspondence here between the ‘image’ of the first and second clauses. This creates a linkage between the pronoun ‘him’ at the end of the second clause, with *adam* – ‘man’- in the first clause. Using the poetry of Hebrew parallelism, then, Moses transforms the singular ‘him’ of the second clause into the plural ‘male and female’ of third strophe. This is the foundation of the passage we have already looked at in Genesis 5:2, “*He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.*” The significance of this correspondence is rarely mentioned by the commentators: that the dynamic of the division of humanity into male and female is a central feature of the *imago Dei*. Reformed theologians, especially,

⁶³ Heard, *Tripartite Nature of Man*; 146.

note that in Man God has created a being who is designed and destined to relate to God. This is a blessed truth and not to be minimized. But there is another, and very important, relationship that is contained here: that the dynamic between male and female – and this will become evident through later biblical teaching regarding marriage – is itself a manifestation of the *imago Dei*. Man not only is the representative of God in his individual self, he is also, and perhaps *more* so, the representative of God in his interrelatedness, male and female.

But neither the **functional** nor the **relational** aspects of the *imago Dei* can be considered definitive as far as explanations of the term. These are manifestations – of purpose or of manner, perhaps – but only manifestations of the ‘image.’ The heart of the matter is not derived from within the text of Genesis 1:26-27, but rather from the fact that there is such a text to begin with. This is the **ontological aspect** of the *imago Dei*, the meaning of the concept at the level of ‘being’ and not just purpose or manner. This perspective is one that simply meditates upon the vast chasm that exists in the Creation narrative, between all that goes before, and verse 26, “*Let Us make Man...*” This chapter is, after all, the book of origins – the beginnings of ‘being.’ Therefore, the change in tone from “*Let there be...*” to “*Let Us make...*” is of phenomenal significance in our study of the meaning of the *imago Dei*. “Hitherto the simple fiat of omnipotence has sufficed – ‘God said.’ Now the Creator – Elohim – is represented as taking counsel with Himself (for no other is mentioned): ‘Let us make man in Our image...’”⁶⁴

The **ontological aspect** of the *imago Dei* lies at the root of our understanding of the concept, and of ourselves and, really, our understanding of God, too. Simply put, Man is *God-like*; he is a being who is like God. Leon Kass writes perceptively, “Any image, inasmuch as it is an image, has a most peculiar manner of being: it both *is* and *is not* what it resembles.”⁶⁵ Thus the study of the *imago Dei* in Man cannot begin from within Man, though it must begin there since it is Man who is studying. But it cannot really begin there, because there can be no correlation between the image and the

⁶⁴ Orr, *God's Image in Man*; 35.

⁶⁵ Kass, Leon *The Beginning of Wisdom* (New York: Free Press; 2003); 37.

prototype unless there is an awareness of the prototype. What this means is that the whole being of Man is imprinted with the nature of Godlikeness – an image, not the original – and that Man cannot be known apart from the One of whom he is the image.

This is why the various interpretations of the *imago Dei* often have a strong sense of reasonableness to them, while at the same time a definite insufficiency. Lewis and Demarest are closer to the right perspective, “The general statements concerning the *imago*...suggest that in the broadest sense (i.e., metaphysically, intellectually, morally, emotionally, volitionally, and relationally) persons closely resemble God their Maker.”⁶⁶ This observation, that the *imago Dei* is ontologically oriented toward the nature of God, helps to explain the insufficiency of the general track of Reformed theology when it seeks to discover the original meaning of the phrase by looking to those passages that speak of the renewed image in Christ. Calvin states this common position clearly,

Nevertheless, it seems that we do not have a full definition of ‘image’ if we do not see more plainly those faculties in which man excels, and in which he ought to be thought the reflection of God’s glory. That, indeed, can be nowhere better recognized than from the restoration of his corrupted nature.⁶⁷

But this logic circles back on itself, for when man seeks the knowledge of himself from within himself – even from within his redeemed self – how can he escape the corruption of conception that remains in the fallen mind? If left to his own self-analysis, how accurate can man’s determination that ‘in which he ought to be thought the reflection of God’s glory’ turn out to be? Will he not be liable to follow the dictates of the prevailing philosophy of Man? The discovery of the *imago Dei*, by the very nature of the ontological relationship between the image and the original, is ‘past finding out.’ Man’s knowledge of himself will grow proportionately with his knowledge of God, whose image he bears. But the greatest approximation to that knowledge that man can have in this life, is in the knowledge of the perfect Man and fullest image: Jesus Christ.

⁶⁶ Lewis & Demarest, *Integrative Theology*; 134. Notice that these two theologians leave out ‘physically’ from their list.

⁶⁷ Calvin, *Institutes I.XV.4*.

Session 4: A Living Soul

Scripture Text: Genesis 2:7

*“The being of man plants its foot on the earth,
and the being of the earth culminates in man,
for both are destined to a fellowship in one history.”*
(Franz Delitzsch)

A great deal of ink has been spilled – and most of it wasted – over the fact that the Book of Genesis provides us with two ‘creation accounts.’ Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 are to some complementary, to others contradictory as they relate the biblical story of Creation from two different literary perspectives. The trouble, it seems, only comes to a head when one forces a too literal reading on the literary structure of Genesis 1, where the poetic parallelism of the days of Creation are often read in a literal chronology of events (see the study on Genesis 1 for a more detailed discussion of the parallelism between Days 1 & 4, 2 & 5, and 3 & 6). Genesis 2 provides (pardon the pun) a more ‘down to earth’ look at the more comprehensive, but less specific, narrative of Genesis 1. It may be that the two accounts derive from closely related oral traditions that were passed down to Moses’ generation, but this in and of itself does not necessitate a conflict between the two. There are, in fact, no obvious contradictions; and Genesis 2 provides a valuable insight into the Creation as it is centered around God’s cogent, His image on earth, Man.

Man: A Unity:

For this particular study, the second Creation narrative provides a most valuable – indeed, indispensable – perspective on the *how* of Man’s creation, whereas chapter 1 provides only the *what* of Man – the *imago Dei*. Man is distinguished in Genesis 1:26-27 as being created by God in a fashion other than the fiat, “*Let there be...*” that pertains to the rest of the created order. But nothing is said in chapter 1 regarding *how* Man was created – just what it was that constituted the first human – in the image of God. That information we find in chapter 2, verse 7. However, very much like Genesis 1:26, we are

not furnished with a great deal of information with regard to how Man was created. At first glance we are given just the bare elements of his constitution, and the mysterious electro-chemical pneumatic catalyst that initiated life: beginning with the dirt of the earth, molded we assume into the shape of Man, and then breathed into by God, Man becomes 'a living soul.' That is all we are given, but it is a tremendous amount contained in a very few words.

The three major components of any discussion regarding the composition or constitution of Man, are found here in Genesis 2:7 - a physical *body*, a *spirit*, and a *soul*. In technical terms, these three are the *corporeal*, the *pneumatical*, and the *psychical* components of human nature. The language of Genesis 2:7 read somewhat like a chemical equation, with an initial substance, a catalyst or reactant, and a product. We might illustrate it thus (without any attempt to balance the reaction!):

Body formed from + Inbreathing of the → "A living soul"
the dust of the earth 'breath of lives'

This being the first mention in Scripture concerning the constitution of Man, it may justly stand as somewhat of a blueprint - lacking in details, to be sure, but representative of the most fundamental analysis of Man's being. If asked, on the basis of Genesis 2:7, what Man is, the answer would be 'a living soul.' This turns out to be insufficient as a definition, simply because there is anything but agreement on just what a *soul* is. J. B. Heard comments, "To write the history of the soul would be to write a history of philosophy."⁶⁸ Furthermore, it is evident in Scripture, and in life experience, that Man is not the sole possessor of a soul; many, if not all, of the animal world also have a soul. Nonetheless, this is where the Bible would have us begin: Man became a 'living soul.' The nature of this soul, and the composite nature of Man involving a body, a soul, and a spirit, must be worked out from this point of departure: Man *is* a living soul.

⁶⁸ Heard, *Tripartite Nature*; 48.

Two principles of anthropology may be gleaned from this verse, and the preliminary data point of Man being (or becoming) a living soul. The first is that Man is neither a dichotomy (Body & Soul) nor a trichotomy (Body, Soul, and Spirit), He is, rather, a unity (A Living Soul). Thus, “We *distinguish* rather than *divide*, whenever we speak of the three parts of man’s nature.”⁶⁹ In this lesson we will investigate the claims of those who contend that Man is a dichotomy of Body and Soul/Spirit, as well as the arguments of those who hold that Man is a tripartite being of Body, Soul, and Spirit. It is important at the outset, however, to lay the foundation of Man’s *unity*. “Anyone who does not force on Scripture a dogmatic system, must acknowledge that it speaks *dichotomously* of the parts viewed in themselves, *trichotomously* of the living reality, but all through so as to guard the fact that human nature is built upon a plan of unity.”⁷⁰

The basis of unity in human nature becomes critical in two other branches of anthropological study: that of the Fall of Man (Hamartology, the Doctrine of Sin), and that of the Incarnation of Christ (Christology, the Doctrine of Jesus Christ). Tremendous errors and heresies have arisen due to the initial mistake of not recognizing the unity of human nature. The undeniable fact that the Bible speaks of a human soul, and of the spirit, and of a body, has led men to consider the three elements as divisible, as distinct characteristics of Man that may be separated without fundamental damage to the being of Man. Thus the error of Apollinarius (d. AD 390) that the Holy Spirit took the place of the human spirit in Jesus. A more modern version of this view, called ‘neo-Apollinarianism,’ substitutes the Logos for the human soul or spirit of Jesus. In either case, the composite being is thus rendered something other than human, and therefore *no longer* the fit Redeemer of man. Understanding the two natures that united in one Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, is difficult enough without inserting erroneous views as to the nature of Man to begin with.

As to the Doctrine of Sin, a false division of human nature into three parts has resulted in faulty views on what it is that happened to Adam – in what sense he ‘died’ –

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*; 77.

⁷⁰ Laidlaw, *Bible Doctrine of Man*; 86.

when he succumbed to temptation and fell from grace and innocence. Two immediate facets of this doctrine that are impacted by error in understanding the unified nature of Man, are those of Original Sin and Total Depravity. These two aspects of Hamartology will be investigated further in this study, as we contemplate the results of Adam's sin on human nature, and the propagation of that sin within the human race. Suffice it to say at this point that only a unified human nature explains the continuation of sin through the race by natural generation, and the comprehensive manner in which sin has infected the whole nature of man. "Sin is a principle which has penetrated to the centre, and thence corrupts the whole circuit of life."⁷¹

It is worth noting at this point, however, that the view that separates the composite parts of human nature into distinct elements – body and soul, or body, soul, and spirit – is very susceptible to the Platonic attitude of magnifying the immaterial (soul/spirit) and denigrating the corporeal (body) aspects of Man. Within historic Jewish and Christian theology, this tendency leads to the belief that sin resides solely, or at least mostly, within the physical body, a view that cannot but diminish the centrality of the resurrection within the scope of Christian dogma and hope. But such a view finds no support in Scripture and, as Laidlaw writes, "the view which connects sin with the material body is neither Hebrew nor Christian."⁷²

Dichotomy of Body & Soul:

Once we accept the foundational truth that Man is a unity, a composite whole incapable of separation while remaining truly human, we have still to recognize that the Bible does speak of elements within human nature. The 'formula' of Genesis 2:7 is an equation with two reactants, a *material* and an *immaterial* one. The recognition of these two disparate aspects of human nature has led to the predominant view among Reformed theologians: that Man comprises a *dichotomy*. The interesting thing is that the typical dualism of human nature is stated as between *body* and *soul*, whereas the

⁷¹ Laidlaw; 122.

⁷² *Ibid.*; 116.

passage under investigation in this lesson seems to set the difference between *body* and *spirit*.

The process of Man's creation begins with inanimate material, "*And Jehovah Elohim formed Man (adam) from the dust of the earth (adamah).*" The verb in this clause is not the *bara* the creative act, but rather *yatsir*, 'to form or make.' The consequent analogy found throughout the rest of Scripture is that of God as the Potter, and Man as the clay. The significance of this part of the passage is to highlight Man's connection with the earth, as well as the uniqueness of his formation as an act of 'labor' or of craftsmanship on the part of God, as opposed to the simple fiat of creation encountered earlier. God *could* have created Man by simply uttering the formulaic and powerful, "*Let there be...*" but, in keeping with the prior indication of something different here (Genesis 1:26), He relates the formation of Man as an act of 'manual' labor.

This detailed account (such as anything in Genesis is detailed) has two purposes. The first is to show us that Man is inexorably tied to the earth from which he was formed. He is, as the Apostle Paul puts it, "*of the earth, earthy.*" As earth is the font of Man, so it will become his end in sin,

*Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (Genesis 3:19)*

But sin is not yet in the picture in Genesis 2:7, so we may hope for a better signification of Man's derivation from the earth. This we find in the second half of the verse; that Man was specially prepared to receive life in a direct manner from God. This is not to say that all life does not derive from God; it does. Furthermore, we are not told just how the life of all other living creatures was obtained. In all other cases, we are left to assume that there was a divine, unrecorded "*Let there be Life*" as there was a recorded "*Let there be Light.*" But the Holy Spirit intends to convey a much closer connection between the creature called Man and both the earth from which he is taken, and the God who gives him life.

The very words used in Genesis 2:7 convey the practical coming-to-pass of the divine intention stated in Genesis 1:26, for as we saw in the previous lesson, the words used there – *tselem* (image) and *demuth* (likeness) – connote a physical representation, a ‘plastic’ form. We should therefore not be surprised to come to Genesis 2:7 and find God forming Man out of the clay – *literally* creating an image that would become His representation on earth. What is remarkable is the thought that an earthly form could in any way represent the eternal Ruler of Heaven. But Man is not lowered to earth from above, to rule as a Conqueror-King from without. Rather, he is raised up from the very earth he is to be set over, denoting an intimate relationship between the Ruler and the ruled, between Man the cogent of God and the rest of Creation which God has set under him. Delitzsch writes,

Man, in order to become lord of the earth world, must become, even in his coming into existence, closely associated with it; he is constituted with it, and it with him, in absolute connection: the being of man plants a foot on the earth, and the being of earth culminates in man, for both are destined to a fellowship in one history.⁷³

This lifeless form of Man in the hands of God – and that is the image we are given in the first half of Genesis 2:7 – is to be animated by a self-conscious act of God that forever unites Man with Himself: “*and God breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives...*” Theologians universally find the Spirit, or ‘spirit,’ of God in this statement, though the more common term, *ruach*, is not the Hebrew word used here as ‘breath.’ It is left in obscurity just what the ‘spirit’ is in this clause: Is it the Holy Spirit? Is it simply animating inspiration? If the former, then one may conclude that at the Fall Adam was deprived of the Holy Spirit and ‘died.’ But was then animated him for the duration of his subsequently long life? It seems safer to conclude that what we have here in Genesis 2:7 is not an allusion to the Holy Spirit, but rather to the source of life in Man as coming immediately from God, for it is God’s ‘breath’ that gives Man life. Again, we know from other passages of Scripture that all living things depend on the ‘breath of

⁷³ Delitzsch; *Biblical Psychology*; 92.

God' for their continued existence. Though the psalmist uses the more common *ruach*, his meditations in Psalm 104 confirm the reality that all life owes its origin and continuance to God,

*They all wait for You
To give them their food in due season.
You give to them, they gather it up;
You open Your hand, they are satisfied with good.
You hide Your face, they are dismayed;
You take away their spirit, they expire
And return to their dust.
You send forth Your Spirit, they are created;
And You renew the face of the ground.* (Psalm 104:29-30)

The New American Standard version translates *ruach* as 'spirit,' and capitalizes the second occasion of the word, in Psalm 104. The King James translates the first usage as 'breath' and the second as 'spirit,' though the Hebrew words are the same, *ruach*. These translations are followed in similar manner by the New King James and others, illustrating the tendency among Christian translators to see *ruach* as 'spirit' rather than breath, and to understand God's *ruach* as the Holy Spirit. But the underlying truth in such passages is not so particular: all life derives directly from God, whose continued grace in giving breath is the sole and ultimate reason that any life continues.

Perhaps this is the significance of the plural form in the second clause of Genesis 2:7, "*the breath of lives.*" The Greek translation of Genesis 2:7 places this in the singular, and all common English versions have done the same: "*the breath of life,*" but the Hebrew appears to be incontrovertibly plural. If the plural is accurate, and we have no reason to doubt that it is, then we confirmed in concluding that the passage does not allude to the Holy Spirit, but rather to the fact that God is the source of all life; His is the breath of *the living*; i.e., of lives. This analysis thus further highlights the unique narration of Man's formation, for if all living creatures derive their breath from God – and this is what the psalmist teaches us – then what is so special about Man? The question cannot be impious, for it is essentially the same question posed by Qohelet,

*I said to myself concerning the sons of men, "God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts." For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust. **Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?*** (Ecclesiastes 3:18-21)

Interestingly, the New American Standard chose to translate by 'breath' the same *ruach* that the translators rendered 'spirit' in Psalm 104. Perhaps this is some evidence that we do not really know what we are dealing with when we contemplate the source and fact of life. Be that as it may, the writer of Ecclesiastes expresses a sincere frustration as to what may be the difference between man and beast, for each dies, and it is not always clear that the breath of one ascends while that of the other descends – for both return to dust. Indeed, Qohelet tells us that the beast is derived from the same dust as is Man. So what do we make of Genesis 2:7?

If we return to the passage without preconception as to the composition of Man, we are immediately impressed by the intimacy of the language. The vision painted here in words is that of Almighty God shaping out of the clay the one creature that He has already said was to be His image. The centrality of Man in the plan of God, and the intimate love with which God formed Man, is evident in the next verse,

*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 being. The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and **there He placed the man whom He had formed.*** (Genesis 2:7-8)

Genesis 2:7 is indeed a very important verse with regard to biblical psychology, though the lessons it teaches toward that subject are not so clear as to command universal agreement among biblical scholars and theologians. But before we continue in the study of Man's composite nature, it is important to notice the 'scene' with which we are presented here. It is not the deistic version of God as the distant Creator, speaking the universe into existence but then leaving it to operate according to its intrinsic physical laws. Rather what we have here is about as imminent a portrayal of the Eternal and Infinite One as can be imagined. If we may say it reverently, we find

God 'getting His hands dirty' in the formation of Man, molding His image out of the dust of the earth. The manner in which Man then receives life – that God *breathed into his nostrils* – has the intimacy of resuscitation (except that resuscitation implies prior life; but 'suscitation' isn't a word).

But man becomes a living soul as God breathes the breath of life into his nostrils; in this most direct and personal way. It is to man, and to man alone, that God gives breath in this manner. It is man, and man alone, who becomes a living soul in this way. And this, and this alone, is the distinguishing feature of man – his humanity – according to this passage.⁷⁴

Thus the typical dichotomous view – that Man consists of Body and Soul – is perhaps reading too much into the passage, since it is evident that animals have souls as well as men, and derive their 'breath' from the Almighty no less than men. Furthermore, at least from Genesis 2:7 it would seem that any dichotomy should be between body and *spirit*, for that is the second reactant in the equation that produces a *living soul*. Perhaps it is safer to say, with Genesis 2:7, that Man is a body who has a spirit, the two combining to constitute a living soul. Or, in another way, that Man is a soul in a body animated by a spirit. Lewis and Demarest sum it all up very well, though perhaps not really shedding much additional light on the matter, "Scripture depicts the person as a complex material-immaterial unity."⁷⁵

Body, Soul, & Spirit – the Tripartite View:

The study of Biblical Psychology developed in the 19th Century as scholars – mostly in Germany and Great Britain – sought to classify the information provided in Scripture regarding the composition of Man. This is not to say that Christian theologians – or Jewish rabbis, for that matter – had nothing to say concerning human psychology in the millennia before the 1800s, only that the systematic presentation of the data and conclusions of various writers, became a more focused discipline within

⁷⁴ Barth, *Dogmatics III.1.236*.

⁷⁵ Lewis & Demarest; 134.

the overall rubric of Biblical Theology during that century. One of the classic works from that day is Franz Delitzsch's *A System of Biblical Theology*, first published in 1855. Delitzsch admits that the Bible is by no means a psychological textbook, but nonetheless asserts that it has a great deal to say about human psychology.

And although what Scripture gives us to ponder in such statements at Gen. ii.7 and I Cor. xv.45, may be called only pointings of the finger, still a biblico-psychological investigation must be justified which takes the course indicated by these finger-signs.⁷⁶

Delitzsch favors the development of Biblical Psychology as a discipline, asserting the necessity for theologians to formulate their doctrine of Man from the biblical data as opposed to psycho-analytical information derived apart from a biblical perspective.

Science, moreover, has the duty of bringing to light the materials of doctrine latent in Scriptures, - of collecting that which is scattered there, - of explaining that which is hard to be understood, - of establishing that which is doubtful, - and of combining the knowledge thus acquired into a doctrinal whole, consistent and compact.⁷⁷

But if Man is a unity, what is the basis for a biblical psychology? The answer is evident to anyone who has read the Bible, and has noticed the various terms that are used there to describe a human being. Three terms are both most common and most critical to this study: *body*, *soul*, and *spirit*. To these we may add *flesh*, *heart*, and *bowels*, as well as several other allusions to human body parts that represent facets of the human personality. But the Big Three are Body, Soul, and Spirit, and there is anything but agreement as to their relative meanings and significance in a truly biblical psychology. The basic issue comes down to two concerns: First, what is the relationship of the material body to the immaterial soul, a topic we have already touched upon in this lesson; and second, is there a biblical difference between the soul and the spirit, or are they functional synonyms? The *dichotomist* view maintains the essential equivalency of meaning between the soul and the spirit, whereas the *tripartite view*, or

⁷⁶ Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*; 15.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*; 17. Delitzsch's concept of 'compactness' translates into a 569 page treatise.

the *trichotomist*, contends a subtle but significant difference between these two characteristics of the human immaterial nature. As mentioned previously, one's view on this matter will directly influence one's view on the nature of the Fall and of redemption. Added to this is the nature of human propagation, a topic to be discussed in our next lesson.

The standard view among Reformed theologians is dichotomist, with the soul taken to refer to the entire immaterial part of human nature, including the mind and will as well as the spirit. James Boyce states the matter succinctly: "The nature of man is



James P. Boyce (1827-88)

composite. It is usually considered as a union of body and soul."⁷⁸ This common view stems from two philosophical maxims; the first being the division of the universe into two categories - material and immaterial - and the consequent application of this perspective to the nature of Man. The second stems from the central role played by reason and will in the Reformed doctrine of Man, and the *a priori* determination that these are functions of the soul; in fact, determinative of the soul.

Although he denies that the Greek worldview is the source of the Christian view of a duality or dichotomy of human nature, Laidlaw nonetheless alludes to Greek philosophy at the beginning of his discussion on "the *duality* of human nature." He writes,

The anthropology of the Greek...rested on a dualistic scheme of the universe. Soul and body, mind and matter, were the representatives of man in contrary opposites in the nature of things.⁷⁹

In defining and defending the dual or dichotomist view, Laidlaw employs very similar language to that which he attributes to the Greek philosophers; the primary difference is that Laidlaw - and Christian theology in general - argues for a *unity* of the two facets of human nature, whereas the Greeks stipulated a *hostility*.

⁷⁸ Boyce, *Abstract of Theology*; 194.

⁷⁹ Laidlaw; 59.

The antithesis is clearly that of lower and higher, earthly and heavenly, animal and divine. It is not so much two elements, as two factors uniting in a single and harmonious result, - 'man became a living soul.' Here, then, we have a dichotomy no doubt substantially agreeing with that which has been current wherever man analyses his own nature, but depending on an antithesis native to the Scriptures.⁸⁰

But throughout the history of Christian analysis of human nature, there have been scholars who have challenged the duality model, no less on the basis of what the Bible says than those who support that model. The classic passage that gives rise to a *tripartite* view is the Pauline benediction in I Thessalonians 5.

*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your **spirit and soul and body** be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (5:23)*

The first trichotomist of the Christian Church may have been the Latin theologian and apologist Tertullian (AD 160-220). His formula of human nature was concisely stated as "The soul is the body of the spirit, as the flesh is the body of the soul."⁸¹ More recently, Delitzsch also advocates a tripartite view, taking the above passage from I Thessalonians 5 as his point of departure. Delitzsch reasons that Paul's language is too specific for us to simply blend the soul and spirit into one immaterial substance or characteristic of Man. He then attempts to set forth the distinction between the two elements, and while one can appreciate his desire to let Paul's benediction stand as it is written, drawing also from Genesis 2:7, one also notices a bit of metaphysical imagination creeping into Delitzsch's definitions.

The spirit is the in-breathing of the Godhead, and the soul is the out-breathing of the spirit...The spirit is the life-centre provided for the body, as for the object of its endowment with soul, and the soul is the raying forth of this centre of life. The spirit is (let it be well considered) the inward being of the soul, and the soul is the external nature of the spirit.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; 60.

⁸¹ Quoted by Delitzsch; 102.

⁸² Delitzsch; 118-119.

Delitzsch does not pretend to have fully explained the nature of Man, but he does believe that such an explanation takes its origin from Genesis 2:7, where we find all three of the elements present. "It is impossible to attain to the profundity of Gen. ii.7; for this one verse is of such deep significance that interpretations can never exhaust it: it is the foundation of all true anthropology and psychology."⁸³

Contemporary with Delitzsch, the Scottish minister and theologian J. B. Heard wrote a 374 page book on the subject, entitled *The Tripartite Nature of Man*. In this book Heard shows, at least to his own satisfaction, that a dual or dichotomous view of human nature is insufficient to explain a number of biblical doctrines, from the Fall to Regeneration to the Resurrection. He parts with orthodox Reformed thinking on the subject of the *imago Dei* by denying the centrality of the human rational mind as essential to the image. "Reason not being that part of our nature in which we are like God, we cannot by discourse of reason know God."⁸⁴ Heard then goes on to show that the soul, in which reason dwells, cannot be the highest part of human nature; this must be the spirit.

The strength of Heard's argument lies in his willingness to treat the two immaterial parts of human nature - soul and spirit - as something more than mere synonyms, though he admits that their usage in Scripture is far from clinically exact. He struggles, it seems, with the impact of the Fall on the human tripartite composition, at times calling the fallen spirit 'dead' and at other times (and sometimes in the same sentence) calling it 'dormant.' This is hardly a condemning critique of Heard's analysis, as the subject of the dynamics of death within man's first sin is hardly child's play. The overall argument is strengthened by his analysis of Man's threefold perspective as he lives life both in and over God's creation. Heard provides a helpful delineation of man's perceptive capacities as being first, **sense conscious**; second, **self conscious**, and third **God conscious**. These categories lend themselves to the tripartite view, and will prove useful in subsequent analysis of Man as fallen and as redeemed.

⁸³ *Ibid.*; 90.

⁸⁴ Heard; 99.

Session 5: Biblical Psychology

Scripture Text: Psalm 139:13 - 16

*“Neither the absolute nature of God,
nor the absolute nature of man,
is the Bible’s proper subject,
but the relation of the two to each other.”*
(J. B. Heard)

The phrase ‘biblical psychology’ beings to the mind of 21st Century believers something far different than their spiritual ancestors of the mid- to late-19th Century. Today ‘psychology’ is somewhat synonymous with ‘counseling,’ and ‘biblical psychology’ with ‘nouthetic counseling,’ or ‘counseling from the Bible.’ Nouthetic Counseling claims to follow the biblical (and especially Pauline) pattern of Confrontation, Concern, and Change to bring a believer to a more stable mental and emotional place in life.⁸⁵ Biblical counseling has become increasingly popular in Western evangelicalism, and seminaries have added entire curricula dedicated to its study and practice. Large churches, and many small ones as well, have specific ‘pastors of counseling,’ or counseling centers. Frankly, a great deal of modern psychoanalysis and humanistic psychology has crept into this counseling, and at times the ‘biblical’ adjective is little more than a veneer over sanctified Freud or Jung.

‘Biblical Psychology’ meant something entirely different to Franz Delitzsch, who wrote *A System of Biblical Psychology* in 1855, or to J. B. Heard, who wrote *The Tripartite Nature of Man* in 1870, or John Laidlaw, whose *The Bible Doctrine of Man* was published in 1895. These men were at the forefront of a ‘new’ branch of Theology that dealt with the biblical teaching concerning the nature of man, as man as well as created in the image of God. Their reasoning for so writing is eminently logical: if Scripture reveals to us the *creation* of Man, then we may presume that it will also reveal to us the *nature* of Man. And while each of these authors readily admits that the Bible does not us the various terms – soul, body, spirit, heart, mind, etc. – in any sort of ‘clinical’ sense, they

⁸⁵ <http://www.nouthetic.org/about-ins/what-is-nouthetic-counseling>

also refuse to accept that these terms are used *without* sense. To them Biblical Psychology is simply that which the Bible teaches about Man, and they maintain – with great justification – that a biblical understanding of human nature is essential to a biblical understanding of the other, more ‘popular’ tenets of Christian doctrine, including Sin and Salvation, Christ, and the Church. Furthermore, each author recognized in his own writings that reciprocal nature of the relationship of God and Man, wherein the knowledge of one is set against and answers back to the knowledge of the other.

Any study of the biblical doctrine of Man will follow several common and consistent trajectories. There will be the discussion of Man being created in the image of God, which we have already addressed in this study, followed by the path of Man into Sin, and his propagation in Original Sin, which will be addressed in one of our upcoming lessons. There is also the trajectory of Redemption, with the foundation of the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Godhead as fully Man. Along this line comes the nature of the *new birth*, which cannot be fairly interpreted in mere metaphorical terms, and of the doctrine of the *resurrection* and the future life. Even such issues as marriage and family impinge on our understanding of the nature of Man, and properly interpreting the biblical data one each of these doctrines or day-to-day life issues will be contingent upon properly interpreting what the Bible has to say about human nature. Biblical Psychology, therefore, is not a separate branch of study pursued by future ‘nouthetic counselors,’ but rather an integral part of Biblical and Systematic Theology. J. B. Heard summarizes his treatise in these words,

The Bible, taken as a whole, is neither a book of pure psychology, nor even of pure theology. Neither the absolute nature of God, nor the absolute nature of man, is its proper subject, but the relation of the two to each other.⁸⁶

Laidlaw offers an additional benefit of Biblical Psychology: in the realm of Christian Apologetics. He states simply that it should be no surprise to a believer that

⁸⁶ Heard; 355.

the Bible has much to say about the nature of Man. But beyond that, the believer should have confidence that *what* the Bible has to say about Man will often resonate with even unbelievers, as the Bible – correctly understood – can only reveal truth concerning human nature. Laidlaw writes,

There is also a collateral use which such a study may be hopefully expected to effect. The nature of man is a stronghold of modern Christian apologetic. It always has been, indeed, one of the surest defences of the Christian faith, that Christians were furnished by their religion with the most satisfactory answer the human mind and heart have ever received concerning man's own being. That religion has the supreme claim to be divine which best enables man to meet the Sphinx of nature with a solution to the most puzzling of her riddles – the one of which he is himself the subject.⁸⁷

Man is, therefore, a fit object of study within the curriculum of Biblical Theology, as he is undoubtedly the central creature of biblical revelation. What the Bible tells us about Man might not be formulated in a clinical manner within its pages, but the believer may rest assured that the data is true, and that the correlation of that data will build a solid foundation for understanding both human nature *and* everything else. James Orr, the noted 19th Century Scottish apologist, vigorously denies the modern, evolutionary tendency to simply make Man a higher form of animal, and in doing so Orr is in perfect harmony with the 'full counsel of Scripture' concerning Man. Orr writes, "for psychological man you must erect a distinct kingdom; nay, you must even dichotomise the universe, putting man on one side, and all things else on the other."⁸⁸ That is the approach and presupposition of this study, at this point of which we summarize many years of biblical study concerning the 'nature' or composition of Man: Body, Soul, and Spirit. But this summary will not be 'clinical,' as we have already touched upon the two common views concerning the composition of human nature: the *dichotomist* and the *tripartite* views. Rather we will look at the biblical teaching regarding Man's nature in light of Sin, and especially in light of the Fall, recorded in Genesis chapter 3.

⁸⁷ Laidlaw; 356.

⁸⁸ Orr; *God's Image in Man*; 127.

The prelude to the Fall is the prohibition placed by God on Adam concerning eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." (Genesis 2:15-17)

From the standpoint of Biblical Anthropology, or Biblical Psychology, the key phrase in this passage is the penalty enjoined upon disobedience: "*for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.*" The Hebrew of the end of this clause may be properly translated "*dying you shall die,*" as the verb 'to die' is repeated in a common Hebraism, thus intensifying the significance of death as associated with disobedience. But Adam *did* eat of the forbidden tree; and Adam *did not* die, at least not physically and at least not right away. What, then, are we to think of the divine threat in Genesis 2:17? Was Adam's stay of execution an immediate manifestation of divine grace? If so, then the intensity of the threat must be admitted to be somewhat 'over the top.' It would be a better hermeneutic to assume that death did take place at the moment of Man's disobedience (in thought, probably, even before deed), and then to investigate the form or nature of that death. This analysis brings to bear the biblical teachings concerning the composition of human nature.

One way of looking at the transition of Adam *before* the Fall and Adam *after* the Fall is to ask the question: What changed? Death is change, and without doubt it is presented in Scripture as *negative* change. Physical death means dissolution: as the vigor of life that maintains the necessary chemical and neurological activity is removed, the molecular components of the physical body immediately begin to decay and dissolve. But this facet of death may be due entirely to the nature of the body as *material*, rather than to the nature of death itself. In other words, dissolution is more likely an *effect* of death than a *definition* of death. Can it rather be said that death is the absence of life, and that the absence of life causes dissolution? If so, then death is conceptually the *removal of life* from a living being, most graphically depicted by the

removal of life from the physical body, leading to decay and dissolution. "Body when separate from psyche, falls back under the laws of matter, and becomes, not merely an animal body, but a corpse, and soon a handful of dust and a few bones."⁸⁹

Be that as it may – and it is an important observation in this particular study – there can be no doubt that the biblical record betrays no evidence of physical diminution in Adam consequent to the Fall. In other words, Adam continued to live *physically*, and to do so for a very long time. Indeed, mankind's development as traced by the biblical record in the first eleven chapters of Genesis would seem to indicate an *increase* in physical strength – or at least no decrease – as evidenced by the mighty deeds done by the antediluvians. Adam, therefore, did not die *physically* in the day in which he ate of the forbidden fruit, though undoubtedly a principle of death was introduced into his body that would eventuate his "*return to dust.*"

What of Adam's soul? The term itself is very difficult to define in any format, including biblically, but it is commonly taken to refer to a man's identity, his essential being as a *person*, his 'personality' in the anthropological and philosophical sense. Theologians and philosophers throughout the ages have argued for the 'immortality of the soul,' the continued existence of the soul in some state after the death and dissolution of the body. "The immortality of the soul was accepted as an axiom as undeniably as the mortality of the body."⁹⁰ Defense of the immortality of the soul is sought by philosophers in the immaterial or spiritual nature of the psychic part of man, but the Bible predicated its view of the immortality of the soul on the fact that God is a living God. Jesus rebukes the Sadducees with these words,

But regarding the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God: 'I AM THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living. (Matthew 22:31-32)

But what *is* the soul? Saying it lives on after the death of the body does not tell us in what the soul consists. This is a difficult line of inquiry, as the biblical data, once

⁸⁹ Heard; 77.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*; 30.

again, is not 'clinical' in this regard, and thus it is hard not to revert to modern psychological terminology in defining the soul.

Our investigation of the seminal passage concerning Man's creation, Genesis 2:7, proved only that man is a living being, which is no less that the Bible says concerning the other living creatures brought into being by God during Creation. The fact that God chose to describe the manner in which Man was made from the dust of the earth, while failing to prove that Man is thus uniquely created, does indicate the importance of process in regard to Man - the intimacy of the creation of God's image and special representative on earth. Yet even the 'equation' of dust of the earth invigorated by the divine breath and thus producing a 'living soul,' does not tell us much of what that soul *is*.

J. B. Heard provides a possible direction of thought in this regard: "Every living thing has a soul; whether it has conscious personality or not it has a soul in so far as it is an individual."⁹¹ The biblical notion of the soul constituting an individual is fairly pervasive, so that on the day of Pentecost we read of "*three thousand souls*" being added to the Church in a single day.⁹² But the biblical intimations concerning the soul lead us to a deeper meaning than just a 'being' in the sense of an individual person. 'Soul,' or *nephesh*, is also used in reference to the deeper, emotive characteristics of human nature, as when we are told of the deep friendship between Jonathan and David.

*Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the **soul** of Jonathan was knit to the **soul** of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.* (I Samuel 18:1-3)

Clearly this passage of affection means more than that the *individual* Jonathan was especially fond of the *individual* David; there is a knitting together here of two souls, which implies emotional, intellectual, and volitional correspondence between the two men. Confirming this deeper, more abstract meaning of 'soul' are the many psalms

⁹¹ Heard; 67.

⁹² Acts 2:41

in which the soul is addressed, or addressing itself, with regard to the psychological outlook of the entire person. The “*why are you cast down, O my soul?*” forms a common lament within the Book of Psalms, and the psalmists seem to indicate that it is through the soul that the man connects with his God.

*You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness,
That my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever.* (Psalm 30:11-12)

*Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
My eye is wasted away from grief, my soul and my body also. For my life is spent with sorrow
And my years with sighing;
My strength has failed because of my iniquity,
And my body has wasted away.* (Psalm 31:9-10)

*As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So my soul pants for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?* (Psalm 42:1-2)

Other biblical terms used to describe the immaterial and abstract nature of Man are: ‘heart’ and ‘mind’ and ‘thoughts and intentions,’ among many others (often attributed to bodily organs such as the spleen or the kidneys. But a clinical definition of the soul is simply not to be found in the pages of Scripture; the biblical ‘soul’ is much too broad a concept, encompassing far too many aspects of abstract human nature to admit of a specific, clinical definition. “Thus the psyche of Scripture is the sum total of man’s natural powers; the life as born into the world, and all that it contains or can attain to.”⁹³ The question that pertains to our current study, however, is not so much regarding a medical description of the human soul as it is the effect of sin upon the soul of Adam. Did Adam’s *soul* die in the day in which he disobeyed God? The answer would appear to be ‘No.’ Adam certainly did not cease to be an individual personality, and his progeny all came into the world as individual personalities. So at least the most

⁹³ Heard; 93.

basic implication of the Hebrew word *nephesh* was preserved in Adam even through and after the Fall. Furthermore, Man continued to have all of the emotions, thoughts, intentions – in short, all of the abstract and immaterial characteristics associated with ‘soul’ – unhindered after the Fall.

Unhindered, but not unaffected. Man continues to exercise the full use of his psychical powers, but since the Fall he does so under the dominion of sin rather than of God’s law and will. He has become ‘natural,’ in Paul’s terminology, which in the Greek is ‘psychical’ – *soulish*. The soul of Man was brought under bondage to an orientation and a motivation contrary to God’s righteous will, which historically resulted in a progressive (regressive?) growth of human sin, to the point that God would repent that He had made Man...and would eradicate the vast majority of that race through the Flood. So we may be seeing a progression here that leads us back to at least a provisional answer concerning the nature of ‘death’ at the time of Adam’s sin. That progression, working backward, goes from the eventual death of the body (though we cannot conclude that men were reduced in their physical capacities at the time of their physical death – Moses was not), to their vitiated soul which, now under the control of sinful impulses, causes a progressive growth in sin and in the moral distance between Man and God. But in neither case may we conclude that there was an immediate ‘death’ on the day that Adam ate of the forbidden tree.

This leaves but one more ‘member’ of the Genesis 2:7 triad: Body, Soul, and *Spirit*. It is significant that most discussions within the theological literature do not treat specifically with the soul or with the spirit, but rather with the relationship of the soul to the spirit. Where a distinction is recognized (and we saw from our previous lesson that a distinction ought to be recognized from the biblical references), the spirit is universally considered the higher of the two immaterial phenomena. Tertullian, the 2nd Century Latin theologian, maintained that “the soul is the body of the spirit, as the flesh is the body of the soul.”⁹⁴ Speaking of the abstract thoughts of a man’s heart, the apostle rhetorically asks, “For what man knows the things of man, except the spirit of the man

⁹⁴ Quoted by Delitzsch; *Biblical Psychology*; 102.

which is in him? Even so the things of God no man knows, but only the Spirit of God."⁹⁵

Generally, therefore, we find the view that the soul of the man is that in which the spirit and the body are conjoined mysteriously into that "*living being*" spoken of in Genesis 2:7. Heard considers that "The soul, which we may here provisionally describe as the *ego* or the *nexus* between matter and mind – is the meeting point between the higher and the lower natures in man."⁹⁶

If we dissect Genesis 2:7, it becomes evident that the life principle in the equation that produced Man is the 'spirit' or 'breath' which God inspired into Adam's nostrils. Man *became* a 'living soul' only after this breath/spirit was given to him. This was the inception of human life; would it not stand to reason that this is where we should look to find the meaning of the first human 'death'? If we accept at face value the divine promise/threat that "*in the day you eat of it, dying you shall die,*" and we conclude from the biblical record that Adam *did not* die either physically or psychically, we are only left with one other element of his nature that could have died that day: his *spirit*.

The Latin word for 'soul' is *animas*, from which we get the English words *animal* and *animate*. The word means 'life' or 'living' and reflects both the Greek (*psyche*) and the Hebrew (*nephesh*) equivalent words in their most basic meaning: "Soul" means 'Life.' But life is not autogenerated; it has a source. In the beginning, Man was created with that source of life coming from God (which is not to say that the source of Adam's life was the indwelling of the Holy Spirit – this would be to read too much into Genesis 2:7). Adam was given *life* – i.e., he became a *soul* – but the principle of that life was the *spirit*, and originally that spirit was oriented toward God. "One part of his nature, his spirit, proceeds from God, but the whole man is of God, and through Him and to Him."⁹⁷ This was Man in his innocence; Man before sin. But a deeper investigation of the circumstances surrounding Adam's Fall will show that in the day in which he ate of the forbidden tree, his spirit died. That death then progressed into his soul, and

⁹⁵ I Corinthians 2:11

⁹⁶ Heard; 47.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*; 144.

eventually robbed the life from his body. This is the 'dying' by which Adam ultimately and completely died.

Consider the probation: the forbidden tree was called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. It seems reasonable to base our interpretation of this description on the principle that there was nothing inherently wrong with the tree itself, or with its fruit. God created all things good. But this tree was selected for Adam's probation, to test our first father with regard to what he would choose as his *source* of knowledge. In other words, to what would Adam orient his life? The choice was not ignorance (lack of knowledge, as some foolishly suppose God wished for Man, and as Satan tempted Man), but rather between two modes of knowledge: legitimate and illegitimate. This view of the events is further confirmed by the immediate effect of the first sin upon the man and woman: their eyes were opened. Again, we cannot assume that prior to the Fall Adam and Eve walked around with their eyes closed; the meaning is figurative, the eyes of their understanding were 'opened' to their own sense perception and their own mental processes - and they saw that they were naked.

This was a transfer from the original source of knowledge, God, to the secondary source of knowledge, man himself. It was also an exaltation of the human soul into the place rightfully occupied by the spirit, for at this moment the human spirit 'died.' Diagrammatically, we may picture what happens as follows:

Before the Fall: The soul is governed by the spirit, and in turns governs the body

Body ← Soul ← Spirit

After the Fall: The spirit is dead, and the soul shifts toward the body as its only venue

Body ← ← Soul ~~Spirit~~

Laidlaw writes, "The fall was an inclination given to the whole nature of Adam in the direction of the flesh, by which the spirit or image of God was deadened in

him.”⁹⁸ Heard, speaking in terms of the three types of consciousness in Man, gives us his understanding of what transpired at the Fall, and in every subsequent human nature born of natural generation from Adam: “But he is a fallen man, with a depraved sense-consciousness (i.e., the body), a darkened self-consciousness (i.e., the soul), and a dead or dormant God-consciousness (i.e., the spirit).”⁹⁹ And Delitzsch adds, more technically (no surprise there):

On the other hand, in the undeniably biblical representations, that in consequence of sin the human spirit is absorbed into soul and flesh, and man, who ought to pass over from the position of *living soul* (Greek *psuche zōsa*) into the position of *life-giving spirit* (Greek *pneuma zōopoiou*), has become, instead of *spiritual* (Greek *pneumatikos*), a being *psychical* (Greek *psychikos*) and *fleshly* (Greek *sarkikos*).¹⁰⁰

Man was designed to be a ‘life-giving spirit,’ as the perfect man, the second Adam, is said to have become by virtue of His obedience (I Cor. 15:45). Instead, Adam became a life-giving soul – the principle of life having been in-breathed, his soul becomes alive with the power of propagation. Only the principle of ‘like begets like’ will prevail: Adam’s offspring will all be ‘psychical’ – *soulish* or *natural*, and by no means *spiritual*. This line of thought will lead us in the next lesson to discuss the propagation of the human race, and of sin through it.

We may test this theory concerning the implications of the Fall on human nature – that it was Adam’s *spirit* that died, his *soul* vitiated and corrupted, and his *body* eventually abandoned to decay – but comparing the thesis to two other situations: first, the one man born in the lineage of Adam in whom there was no sin, and second, the circumstances of regeneration for the elect of Adam’s fallen race.

Consider Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate. It was not possible for Him to be formed of the dust of the ground as Adam was, for then He would not have been a part of Adam’s race and hence disqualified from His role as Redeemer. His conception in the womb of Mary, however, mirrors the formation of Adam recorded in Genesis 2:7 as

⁹⁸ Laidlaw; 77.

⁹⁹ Heard; 102.

¹⁰⁰ Delitzsch; 117.

closely as possible without being an exact replica. In the case of Jesus, the 'spirit' vitality is the Holy Spirit,

The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.
(Luke 1:35)

Theologians have erred in thinking that the Holy Spirit *replaced* the spirit in Jesus Christ, because they failed to see the parallel between the formation of Adam and the conception of Jesus. The life principle that 'created' Jesus in Mary's womb was the Holy Spirit of God, but the truly human Jesus possessed a body and a soul and a spirit just like all human beings. Otherwise He would have been a *tertium quid* - a 'third thing,' neither fully God nor fully Man. As it was, the life-giving soul of Adam was bypassed in that Mary's husband, Joseph, was not the one to provide the seed that would become Jesus. Jesus entered the world at Bethlehem as the first man since Adam to have a pure life connection between His soul and His spirit, which was itself connected to the Spirit of God.

Thus when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan, the temptation took form in a three-pronged attack upon the trifold nature of Man. Jesus was tempted as to his *sense-consciousness*: When He was hungry, Satan said to Him, "*If you are the Son of God, command that these stones be turned to bread.*" Jesus, whose body was in entire subjection to His soul, answered, "*Man shall not live by bread alone.*" The implication here (the conclusion of the quote refers to man's subsistence on every word that proceeds from the mouth of God), is that Jesus would not be swayed from the true source of knowledge (every word of God) for sensual satisfaction. The next temptation was an attack on Jesus' *self-consciousness*: "*And the devil said to Him, 'I will give You all this domain and its glory...if You worship me.'*" To this temptation to authority and grandeur, Jesus simply answered, "*You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.*" Finally, Satan attacked Jesus' *God-consciousness*, tempting Him to doubt the faithfulness of His Father: "*If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here, for it is*

written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You to guard You...'" Jesus was done with this, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." In each temptation, Jesus revealed the proper orientation of the human body to the soul and the human soul to the spirit.

The final struggle that Jesus underwent - His Gethsemane and His Golgotha - also reveal this tripartite understanding of Man's nature. It was His body that He would lay down and take back up - spoken of as a garment. But it was His soul that was deeply troubled and grieved in the garden during His last night, and on the cross it was His spirit that He yielded up to the Father.

When we consider the situation of a fallen man being regenerated by the Holy Spirit, called the 'new birth' in Scripture and a 'new creation,' we find the same progression from spirit to soul to body that was present in the fall of Man. It was a new spirit that was promised to man in the Gospel of the Old Testament (Ezek. 36), and from our analysis of the nature of the human soul, it is evident that the believer does not become a new, different *individual* but remains the same 'person' that he or she was prior to regeneration. Nonetheless, the new vivified spirit immediately begins to work its positive, sanctifying power upon the soul - the renewing of the mind, for instance, spoken of by Paul in Romans 12 - in a gracious reverse of the corrupting effects of sin on the soul of Adam and his progeny. The body, last to die in Adam's case, is the last to be redeemed in the case of the believer, by the resurrection on the last day.

Thus we conclude that in the day that Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, he most certainly did die, and 'dying' he continued to die. His spirit perished through disobedience, his soul's allegiance was transferred by his own will from God as the knowledge of all truth, to himself and his own sense perception as the source of knowledge. This transfer introduced complete corruption into the soul of Adam, which was then propagated through all his fallen race. Ultimately, and by God's grace, Man's soul is withdrawn from his body, bringing about physical death, decay, and dissolution. This entire process was avoided in Jesus both by virtue of His birth and His obedient life, thus enabling Him to become the life-giving spirit, and Man's only hope.

Session 6: Original Sin

Scripture Text: Romans 5:12 - 14

*"In Adam's Fall,
We sinned all."
(New England Primer, 1777)*

The children of Israel complained to the prophet Ezekiel, during the Babylonian Exile, that their banishment from the Promised Land was unjust. It was their fathers who had sinned, not they; so why were they being punished? Their lament, *"The fathers ate sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,"* was answered by the Lord Himself,

"As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore. Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die." (Ezekiel 18:3-4)

The essence of this passage of Scripture is what we all believe to be the way things ought to be: a man will not be punished for the sins of another, but only for his own sin. No one contests the justice of the Lord's answer,

The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself. (Ezekiel 18:20)

Such passages as this one, and the apostle Paul's reminder that *"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his **deeds** in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad,"*¹⁰¹ resonate with our own sense of justice, whereas the idea that punishment should befall one who is innocent of the particular crime is abhorrent to us. It is a miscarriage of justice. Yet just such a 'miscarriage of justice' forms a central plank within Christian Theology: the Doctrine of Original Sin. In its most basic form, this doctrine assigns (or 'imputes') the sin of Adam to his entire posterity, as expounded by Paul in Romans chapter 5,

¹⁰¹ II Corinthians 5:10

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned – for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.
(Romans 5:12-14)

There are variations on the theme between Catholic and Protestant theologians, and within each of these general communions there are divergent views. But the orthodox Christian teaching for two millennia has been in support of the biblical doctrine that Adam's sin has passed down from generation to generation, missing no man or woman save for Jesus, the son of Mary by miraculous birth. Views such as that



Oliver Crisp (b. 1972)

of Pelagius in the fifth century, that each individual human being is conceived and born in the same moral condition as Adam when first created, have been consistently condemned as heretical by the various councils and synods of the Church. Oliver Crisp, a contemporary and modern Calvinist theologian at Fuller Theological Seminary, offers a more comprehensive definition of the concept of 'Original Sin.' Crisp writes,

The full-orbed doctrine of original sin comprises two aspects. These are original corruption and original guilt. Original corruption has two parts: the lack or privation of original righteousness enjoyed by Adam and Eve before the Fall, and the vitiated moral nature that all human being post-Fall are cursed with.¹⁰²

Man is universally corrupted by the sin of the first man, and the guilt of sin encompasses the entire human race from the moment the first man fell. Is this fair? Is this just? Believers claim that it is both just and fair on account of the revealed nature of God as both just and fair, and the fact that the situation is as He ordained it to be. In addition, it is argued, the imputation of Adam's sin upon his posterity paves the way for the imputation of Christ's righteousness to all His heirs according to grace. The traditional Reformed formulation of this theory is called the Federal Headship of Adam,

¹⁰² Crisp, Oliver *An American Augustinian: Sin and Salvation in the Dogmatic Theology of William G. T. Shedd* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster Press; 2007); 57.

as well as the Federal Headship of Christ. Simply put, God ordained that Adam and Christ should stand in a representative position – at the head of their respective ‘race’ of mankind – and be tried and tested, one for all. The result in the first case was the *imputation* of Adam’s sin to his posterity, and in the second case the *imputation* of Christ’s righteousness to the elect.

That which is adopted by Protestants generally, as well Lutherans as Reformed, and also by the great body of the Latin Church is, that in virtue of the union, federal and natural, between Adam and his posterity, his sin, although not their act, is so imputed to them that it is the judicial ground of the penalty threatened against him coming also upon them. This is the doctrine of immediate imputation.¹⁰³

All of this is true, as far as it goes. There is no doubt that Adam stood in the place of the entire human race when he was tempted in the Garden of Eden, and it is no less true that his fall universally impacted his progeny born of natural reproduction. In the same manner we say that Jesus Christ stood in the place of the elect of God – fallen in sin and by themselves irredeemable – and suffered the punishment of the broken Law and offended holiness of God in their place. Thus far representation describes what occurred in the case of both the first and the last Adam. But the theory often runs aground on the common judgment of mankind, that this whole situation is patently unfair: *The father Adam eats sour grapes (or a sour apple?) and the children’s teeth are set on edge!* Crisp notes, “that the traditional Reformed doctrine of the imputation of Adam’s sin, based on the view that Adam is a federal head of humanity involves a kind of legal fiction.”¹⁰⁴ Adam’s descendants are said to be sinners by virtue of his sin, but it is not explained how this transfer of guilt is just and equitable on the principle that every man will be punished, not for the sin of his father, but only for his own sin.

Thus we find that in order to defend the doctrine of Original Sin – indeed, in order to properly understand it ourselves – we must search the Scriptures to see if there is any evidence as to *how* the sin of Adam passes on to his children and, consequently, from generation to generation through human history. Is there a physical genetic

¹⁰³ Hodge, Charles *Systematic Theology: Volume II* (Hendrickson Publishers; 2001); 192-193.

¹⁰⁴ Crisp; 60.

component of original sin – a ‘sin gene’? Or is the transfer according to an immaterial, psychical relationship between the father and the child? In other words: Is sin in the body? Or is it in the soul? Or perhaps both? Finally, there is the nebulous concept called ‘humanity,’ in which some theologians have sought refuge in this difficult topic: in Adam, *humanity* was corrupted, and thus all who partake of humanity are by nature corrupt. “This suggests the idea of humanity as an essence or species standing by itself, so that in the first man’s sin the individual ruled the nature, but ever since the nature rules the individual.”¹⁰⁵ This sounds quite reasonable, but we must remember that the term ‘humanity’ is philosophical, not biblical, and thus the ‘explanation’ of the corruption of the ‘human essence’ is a philosophical, and not a biblical one.

Of course, any analysis of a sin-propagating theory must take into account the birth of Jesus and His sinless human nature. He must be allowed to remain fully a part of Adam’s race, while completely without Original Sin. The best theory will not have to be avoided, modified, or compromised in order to answer the case of the sinless Son of Man, Jesus Christ.

Federal Representation View:

As mentioned above, the traditional Reformed answer to the question of Original Sin is founded on the Federal Headship and the *representation* of Adam for the entire human race. Wilhelmus à Brakel attempts to understand the relationship that the human race bears with its first father, that would justify the transfer of the guilt of Adam’s sin to the whole of his posterity. He defines *imputation* as occurring “because of the crime of another person with whom one exists in a relationship, and thus by virtue of this relationship participates in the same sin.”¹⁰⁶ He goes on to



Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)

¹⁰⁵ Laidlaw; 220.

¹⁰⁶ à Brakel, Wilhelmus *The Christian’s Reasonable Service; Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books; 1999); 383.

set forth three such relationships that prevail among men – the *natural* relationship, the *civil* relationship, and the *voluntary* relationship – only to deny each in turn as being applicable to the case of Adam’s sin passing on to Adam’s seed. à Brakel’s solution is a fourth relationship, one that is unique to Adam (and subsequently to Christ): the *covenantal* relationship. The emphasis is upon Adam’s role as the Head of the human race, not genetically, but as their representative in the *Covenant of Works*. He writes,

...only Adam’s breach of the covenant and not his subsequent sins are imputed to his descendants. This is not merely because they are partakers of the same nature but because they were created in the covenant of works in Adam and have broken it in him.¹⁰⁷

This covenantal relationship between Adam and his posterity is called Adam’s ‘Federal Headship,’ and it constitutes the *representational* or *representative* view of Original Sin. Ligonier Ministries offers this definition of the concept,

Simply put, federalism has to do with representation, with one person acting on behalf of another. God has appointed two representatives in history: Adam and Christ. Adam did not represent the race well; he disobeyed God. As a result, all of his descendants are born with an inclination to sin, and they all share in his guilt and suffer the same penalty he received – death. This is what Paul means when he says in verse 12 [Romans 5] that “all sinned.”¹⁰⁸

The problem that many have found with this doctrine is that is entirely *judicial*, whereas the sinful nature of every man coming into the world by natural generation is *moral*. The Doctrines of Grace teach that man is totally depraved from the moment of conception; yet the doctrine of Federal Headship fails to explain how the imputed guilt of Adam’s sin became a *sin nature* in Adam’s descendants. John Murray, in his essay entitled *The Imputation of Adam’s Sin*, writes that Adam’s posterity “came to have properly in Adam’s disobedience with the result that their judicial status is that belonging to the disobedience in which they have properly. The disobedience of Adam

¹⁰⁷ *Idem.*

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/our-first-federal-head/>; accessed 11July2016.

is brought to bear upon posterity in such a way that the judgment registered upon them is the judgment which the disobedience of Adam elicits and demands.”¹⁰⁹ This is a convoluted way of saying that God calls Adam’s posterity guilty because He has so determined that the judgment deserved in Adam’s case is to be assigned to Adam’s race. William Cunningham puts the matter a bit more clearly,

In virtue of the federal headship or representative identity, established by God between Adam and all descending from him by ordinary generation, his first sin is imputed to them, or put down to their account; and they are regarded and treated by God as if they had all committed it in their own person, to the effect of their being subjected to its legal and penal consequences – so that, in this sense, they may be truly said to have sinned in him and fallen with him in his first transgression.¹¹⁰

These quotations from Murray and Cunningham reflect the traditional understanding of the imputation of Adam’s sin to his descendants as *judicial, legal, and penal*. What is lacking in this covenantal interpretation of Original Sin is an explanation of how it has come to be that man is “*brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin.*”¹¹¹ Oliver Crisp notes that, “The imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity, according to these Reformed theologians, involves no real transference of properties from Adam to his posterity. Adam’s posterity does not gain the property of Adam’s sin and guilt as the deposit of original sin.”¹¹² Adam’s descendants are held accountable for Adam’s sin, in that they must all die, but there is in the Federal view no explanation as to why all of Adam’s descendants – born of ordinary generation – *actually sin*.

Romans 5:12-14

The most systematic treatment of the imputation and propagation of Adam’s sin through the human race is found in Romans chapter 5, beginning in verse 12. At the outset the interpreter must acknowledge that the apostle is not attempting to provide a

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Crisp; 61.

¹¹⁰ Cunningham, William *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth; 1967); 374.

¹¹¹ Psalm 51:5

¹¹² Crisp; 61.

philosophical or clinical description of the nature of Original Sin, but rather to draw an analogy between what happened to mankind through Adam's sin and what happens to the elect through Christ's obedience. The overarching principle here is that those who either benefit – in the case of Christ – or suffer – in the case of Adam – do so on the basis of what the 'one' did in place of the 'many.' Paul writes in regard to Adam's fall,

*For if by the transgression of **the one**, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through **the One**, Jesus Christ.* (Romans 5:17)

It is hard to argue against the principle of representation here, as the entirety of the human race is portrayed as having sinned "*in the one*," that is, in Adam, whereas the gift of righteousness that abounds to the many, is due entirely to the obedience of "*the One*," that is, Jesus Christ. Paul establishes the irrefutability of the first premise – that in Adam all sinned – by simply recognizing that "*death reigns*"; i.e., all men die. "*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.*"¹¹³ Furthermore, the apostle himself uses the word *imputed* with reference to the sin of Adam, "*for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam...*"¹¹⁴ Of course, the problem here is that Paul implies that sin *was not imputed*, since there was no Law, though death still reigned.

Most Reformed theologians interpret this conundrum by saying that there must have been a 'law' between Adam and Moses, since – they assume – sin was imputed to Adam's offspring as evidenced by the universality of death. But that is not what Paul actually *says* in these verses. His '*nevertheless*,' is significant. We may paraphrase his words as "*even though there was no Law from Adam to Moses, and therefore sin was not imputed, **still** death reigned over all men.*" Paul's caveat, "*even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam*," seems to refer – at least within the context of his overall

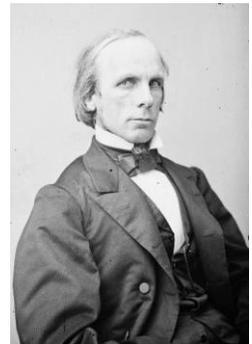
¹¹³ Romans 5:12

¹¹⁴ Romans 5:13-14

discussion – to mankind sinning without the specific command/prohibition/threat structure of a formal ‘law.’ Man still *sinned*, but it appears that there was no formal law structure under which his sin could be judicially critiqued and condemned.

This is a difficult passage, to be sure (*cp.* II Peter 3:16 for comfort). There is one principle here, however, that is crystal clear: *death* is viewed by Paul as the result of *sin* and not as the natural condition of Man. This death that now ‘reigns’ over mankind, entered the world *through this sin of the one man, Adam*. What Paul has to say about the imputation of sin and the existence of a formal law may be (and is) subject to interpretation and debate. But he is unequivocal that the sin of Adam introduced death into the human race, and the evidence of Adam’s sin being propagated through the race is the fact of every man’s death. Thus far we may go: the *penalty* of sin, which is death, is imputed to all men by virtue of the one man’s sin in the Garden.

Is this ‘representation’ on the part of Adam? In the sense that Adam was the first man from whom all mankind subsequently derives; yes, it is representation. But in the traditional Reformed sense that Adam’s only relationship to his posterity was that of covenantal headship; no, there is more to it than that. For Paul also says, “*because all sinned.*” This is the sticky wicket that theologians have struggled with for millennia: in what sense can it be said that the entire human race ‘sinned’ when Adam sinned? William G. T. Shedd comments that Paul’s usage of the word ‘sin,’ “does not denote the transgressions of each individual subsequent to birth, and when no longer in Adam, but the transgression of Adam and Eve inclusive of their posterity.”¹¹⁵ The mechanism of how it is that the entirety of the human race was in Adam when Adam sinned, is not explained by the apostle; it is assumed rather than defended. But theologians, especially in the Reformed tradition, have shied away from this incorporation (literally) of mankind in Adam, in favor of a more judicial and legal representation by Adam of his subsequent race.



W. G. T. Shedd (1820-94)

¹¹⁵ Shedd, William G. T. *Dogmatic Theology, Volume II* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers; 1980); 183.

Augustinian Realism:

Ironically, Reformed theologians who emphasize the representational view do so at the expense of abandoning a central theological view of the ‘patron saint’ of Reformation Theology: Augustine. His controversy with Pelagius in the 5th Century forced the great Latin theologian to wrestle with the doctrine of Original Sin, with the nature of the Fall of Adam and its effects on the human race, and the with the condition of every man born of ordinary generation. His conclusions were not at all times consistent with one another, but he did build a theological-philosophical foundation on which a large portion of subsequent Christian thought has built. This is called *Realism*. The essence of Augustinian realism is summarized by Crisp: “Adam’s progeny were somehow *really* present with Adam at the point of his first sin.”¹¹⁶ Augustine writes,

In fact, because of the magnitude of that offence, the condemnation changed human nature for the worse; so that what first happened as a matter of punishment in the case of the first human beings, continued in their posterity as something natural and congenital...Therefore the whole human race was in the first man, and it was to pass from him through the woman into his progeny, when the married pair had received the divine sentence of condemnation. And it was not man as first made, but what man became after his sin and punishment, that was thus begotten, as far as concerns the origin of sin and death.¹¹⁷

Augustinian realism takes Paul at face value: the entire human race sinned *in Adam*. “Thus, a central insight into the doctrine of original sin provided by Augustinian realism is that Adam’s sin is not mine because it is imputed to me; it is imputed to me because it is mine.”¹¹⁸ This type of realism is not without some support from Scripture, though it must be acknowledged that the concept is a difficult one to comprehend, much less to define. The first element of biblical support comes from the birth of Adam’s son Seth, and the manner in which the Scriptures record that birth.

¹¹⁶ Crisp; 62.

¹¹⁷ Augustine, *The City of God*; XIII.3, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books; 1984); 512.

¹¹⁸ Crisp; 63.

When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth. (Genesis 5:3)

The significance of this verse has already been noted; that the terminology used with regard to Seth's relationship to his father Adam, is the very same terminology that is used to describe Adam's original relationship to God. We know from subsequent passages (i.e., Genesis 9 and James 2), that Adam's posterity *retained* the image of God in which Adam was created, though horribly marred and corrupted. Therefore it is of particular note that the Holy Spirit emphasizes here, in Genesis 5, that Adam's son bore the *image and likeness* of Adam, too. It is too simple and senseless to limit this likeness to physicality; there must be the same metaphysical sense of the words 'image' and 'likeness' between Seth and Adam as there was between Adam and God.

This verse, however, by no means proves that Seth was 'in Adam' when Adam sinned, only that there is a deep connection between Seth and Adam and, by extension, between all sons (and daughters) and all fathers. The unity of the human race is established here, but it is established in Adam as fallen, not as originally created. But the principle of Augustinian realism is exemplified in another place, unrelated to the propagation of either Adam's image or his sin. Speaking of the mysterious Melchizedek, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says this,

*Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises. But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater. In this case mortal men receive tithes, but in that case one receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives on. **And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.*** (Hebrews 7:4-10)

One may argue that the writer is using metaphor here, as the New American Standard translates his conclusion as "so to speak" Levi paid tithes. But that translation is itself interpretive, and may also be rendered "one might even say" (ESV) or "as I may so

say" (Greek/English Interlinear). The Greek phrase is emphatic, with the repetition of the verb 'to say' in both a finite and the infinitive forms; literally, *I say to say*, so it is not self-evident that the writer was utilizing a figure of speech or hyperbole. Furthermore, the overall argument was in favor of the priesthood of Melchizedek over that of the Levites, based on the historical fact that Abraham, the progenitor of Levi, paid tithes to Melchizedek. Without clinically dissecting the meaning of Levi being "*in the loins*" of Abraham during the event recorded in Genesis 14, there can be recognized in Hebrews 7 an element of *realism* between Levi and Abraham that bears upon the overall discussion.

Perhaps the essence of Augustinian realism, and its importance to our understanding of Scripture, is found not so much in our relationship to Adam as in our redeemed relationship to Christ. We may argue without conclusion in regard to Adam's posterity being in Adam when he sinned, or in what manner Levi was in Abraham when the patriarch paid tithes to Melchizedek. In a sense these are academic exercises compared to our grasping the meaning of being 'in Christ.' Are we 'in Christ' only as Christ is the *representative* of His people, or are we 'in Christ' in a manner more *real*, more substantial (if that word is applicable here) than that? This particular discussion pertains more to the segment of Systematic Theology known as Christology, and will have to be delayed until we take up "Christ & Salvation." But the concept of *realism* pertains to the elect in Christ as it does to the human race in Adam, and therefore is worthy of consideration.

Returning to the doctrine of Original Sin, those theologians who have followed, in general, the line of thinking set forth by Augustine (and this represents a very large portion of both Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians over the past fifteen hundred years), have generally considered mankind's presence 'in Adam' to refer to 'humanity' or 'human nature' in very broad, general terms. In other words, it is viewed less in terms of each and every individual being 'in Adam' as it is that the totality of human nature was 'in Adam' and, as each individual human being is an equal partaker of human nature, it is in this sense that all were 'in Adam' when Adam

fell. Crisp calls this the *common human nature version* of Augustinian realism.¹¹⁹ As mentioned earlier, this view creates the concept of ‘humanity’ – not in itself an inaccurate construct, simply one that is not present in the biblical data. ‘Humanity’ as such, therefore, is what is corrupted in Adam’s primal sin, and as ‘humanity’ is the indivisible essence of all human beings (i.e., all human beings possess, essentially, the attribute of ‘humanity’), the sin and corruption of Adam’s humanity is passed on to his descendants by natural generation.

The concept makes sense; everyone seems to understand and agree that ‘humanity’ is the common characteristic of all mankind. But from the biblical perspective it pushes forward what Scripture places backward. The *common human nature* view focuses on that which was in Adam that is now present in us. Thus Adam’s sin is brought forward through the propagation of ‘humanity.’ But the Scripture, and Paul in particular, focuses on the principle of *us* being in Adam. Jan Jacob van Oosterzee, an otherwise solidly biblical theologian, flatly denies what Paul clearly states in Romans 5, in favor of this *common human nature* view. “Still less does he teach that all have already sinned in Adam, so that his act might be considered even as their own; nor that we were already in Adam, but that Adam is in us, in so far, *e.g.*, as the germ continues to live in the fruit, is his expressed meaning.”¹²⁰

It would seem that van Oosterzee has Paul exactly backwards, yet he does recognize the important Pauline concept of not only a natural connection between Adam and his posterity, but also a moral one. The teaching of realism, and especially the *common human nature version* of realism, is an attempt to explain the unity of the human race within the first human, Adam. Nor is this attempt merely academic, for it seeks to understand from a biological, as well as a biblical perspective, the doctrine of Original Sin. This, in turn, translates through the analogy developed by Paul in Romans 5, into a greater understanding of the imputed righteousness that all believers have in Jesus Christ. The awareness of a *real* union between the ‘heads’ of these two

¹¹⁹ Crisp; 65.

¹²⁰ Van Oosterzee, J. J. *Christian Dogmatics* (London: Hodder and Stoughton; 1891); 407.

racess – man as fallen in Adam and man as redeemed in Christ – provides a stronger basis for both faith and hope (in the latter), as well as conviction of the justice of condemnation (in the former), than the federal representation view. Crisp writes in comparison of the two views,

The common nature version of realism shows that the implication of Adam’s first sin is that something really changes with respect to human nature. In this sense, this argument for realism is stronger, and perhaps more plausible, than traditional federalist arguments for imputed sin.¹²¹

Still, the argument can be made that this common nature view is no more just than the federalist imputation view, considering that each individual human being descended from Adam had no say in the matter in either case. To this one may answer that the clay does not have a say as to what will be done with it by the potter, and mankind – as creatures from the hand of God – could have no reasonable quarrel with the manner in which God chose to create it. Granting the sovereign authority of the Potter, as Reformed theologians do and must, the realist opts then for the view that emphasizes the organic unity of the human race in Adam, rather than the one that merely focuses on judicial imputation. This is done, again, not simply to avoid the charge of ‘legal fiction’ by the gainsayer, but more importantly in order to make the best sense of the explanation provided by Paul in various places.

Creationism vs. Traducianism:

The whole line of thinking with regard to the doctrine of Original Sin cannot stop with the relationship between the human race and its first member, Adam. It must proceed to ask the question concerning propagation: just how is it that the human seed is conveyed from generation to generation in terms of the continuation of the stain of sin? Two views predominate within Christian literature, both Catholic and Protestant: *Creationism* and *Traducianism*. The first, creationism, teaches that each individual soul is created by God – theoretically at the moment of conception, though this is not necessary

¹²¹ Crisp; 73.

to the concept – and placed into the conceived body in a manner analogous to the formation of Adam from the dust of the earth. The second, Traducianism, holds that each individual human soul is itself the product of the union of the father and the mother, no less than is each individual human body. The predominant view among Reformed theologians is that of the creationist, with Lutherans favoring the traducian view. Among Reformed theologians, Augustus Strong (Baptist), William G. T. Shedd (Presbyterian), and Franz Delitzsch (German Reformed) all espoused the Traducian view with great vigor in the late 19th Century. The swing vote among both Catholic and Protestant theologians has always been Augustine, who waivered between the two views and provided passages from his voluminous writings that have been used in defense now of Creationism, now of Traducianism.

Augustine, of whom it cannot but be thought that he must or ought to have been the most exclusive traducianist, was wrestling with this question all his life; and it does great honour to his scientific accuracy and candour, that he openly acknowledges his dissatisfied wavering between for and against, although Pelagius was availing himself of creationism to oppose the dogma of inherited sin.¹²²

This comment by Delitzsch is significant for more than its historical interest, in that it points out the difficulty the creationist view has with the doctrine of inherited, or ‘original,’ sin. It was Pelagius’ contention that every individual child is born in the same condition in which Adam was created: sinless and capable of remaining sinless. Borrowing from the platonic idea of a universal ‘Soul’ becoming individualized (Plato would say ‘trapped’) in particular human beings, Pelagius adopted the view that each human soul came fresh from the creative hand of God. As such, he acknowledged, it entered into the human body in a state of moral innocence and not as corrupted by the sin of its parents. This has remained the creationist view to date: that each individual human soul is created new by God when the male sperm fertilizes the female egg within the mother’s womb.

¹²² Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*; 129.

For a Reformed theologian, holding as he must both to the doctrine of Original Sin and of Total Depravity, this presents an insuperable logical and moral hurdle. If the soul comes fresh from God, how then does it become sinful? The only option available is to say that it is somehow immediately corrupted by contact with the sinful flesh of the fetus, which is too evidently Platonist for most Christian theologians to admit. Thus the option chosen is that God, having created the individual soul in sinlessness (for He can create in no other way), removes His Holy Spirit from the soul immediately in consequence of Adam's sin. When one seeks to find the source of the Creationist view, it turns out to be the pervasive belief that souls cannot be propagated as bodies are – a philosophical presupposition that cannot be proven either biblically or empirically.

Considering the creationist explanation for the presence of sin in a soul created 'fresh from the hand of God,' William Shedd powerfully argues that the traditional 'removal of grace' theory is arbitrary and unjust and, therefore, wholly unlike God.

If it be replied that God withdraws common supporting grace in the instant when he creates each individual soul, and therefore every soul apostatizes, this is of the nature of punishment, and punishment according to Scripture and reason supposes previous fault (culpa). God did not withdraw the common supporting grace of his Spirit from Adam, until after transgression. But here, by the supposition of the creationist, is a pure and holy soul fresh from the hand of God, from whom previous to its apostasy God totally withdraws one of his own gifts by creation, in order to bring about apostasy. The withdrawing of grace occurs not because of apostasy, but in order to produce it...Upon the theory of creationism, the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from the newly created soul is an arbitrary, not a judicial act.¹²³

Furthermore, the Creationist view turns out to be destructive to the Federalist Representational view with which it is most frequently united. It is universally agreed that sin is not seated only in the physical body – again, this reeks of Platonic dualism and is consistently rejected by Catholic and Protestant theologians alike. Biblically speaking, sin resides at the very core of human existence – the heart, and it is equally admitted that this speaks as much or more of the soul of man as it does the body. It is

¹²³ Shedd; 50.

not the physical organ of the heart of which the Scriptures speak as ‘desperately wicked,’ but rather the seat of man’s intellect, his emotions and ambitions, his will – in other words, his *soul*. On creationist terms, however, no individual human being’s soul can be justly connected, either naturally or ‘federally,’ with the fallen soul of Adam. “The creationist-representational view means that Adam’s progeny are punishable for a sin that they are not culpable for. Their souls are not passed down from the first human pair, so they cannot partake of the guilt of Adam’s sin.”¹²⁴

The traducian view, once predominant among the post-apostolic Fathers, experienced a resurgence during the Lutheran Reformation, and more recently among 19th Century Reformed theologians. The primary object against traducianism, that the soul cannot be divided, is incapable of proof. The biblical data is not conclusive toward either view, but the burden of proof – so the traducianist believes – rests with the creationist. Delitzsch comments aptly, “As Scripture nowhere declares in a doctrinal manner anything on the origination of the spiritual-psychical nature of man as distinct from the origination of his bodily nature, so no result is to be attained in the ordinary way of proof from Scripture.”¹²⁵ Rather we must look to those circumstances recorded in the Bible in which a human being was brought into the world in a unique manner, and ask whether the overall narrative and the resultant person is best explained along creationist or traducian lines.

The first of these examples is Woman, in the person of Eve. Not only in Genesis 2, but also within Paul’s writings in I Corinthians 11, we find that Eve derives her being from Adam. The creationist argues that Adam’s statement concerning the woman, that she is “*flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone,*” must be held in consideration, though it does fall sort of an explicit statement that the woman’s soul came directly from God. Paul’s statement on this matter proves only the interrelatedness of the man and the woman, a state that continues through the descendants of Adam and Eve.

¹²⁴ Crisp; 25.

¹²⁵ Delitzsch; 132.

Man: The Crux of Creation

For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.
(I Corinthians 11:8-12)

Even the statement, “*but all things are from God,*” proves too much from the creationist viewpoint, as no one asserts that the body is derived directly from God, especially in the case of the first woman. The analogy derived by the apostle between the relationship between the man and the woman, and that between Christ and the Father, would tend to argue in favor of the traducian view, as the nature of Christ is entirely one with the nature of the Father. But neither is this conclusive in the traducianist’s favor, for arguments by analogy are inherently weak.

The second example of a human generation highlighted in special terms in the Bible is the one we have already visited, the birth of Seth ‘in the image and likeness’ of his father Adam. It is hard to deny the traducian lines of this statement, and to limit the ‘image and likeness’ to mere physical similarity. It is rather to be interpreted in a more comprehensive manner – the nature of Adam was reproduced in his son Seth (as it was also in Adam’s other children, including Cain and Abel – Seth is mentioned here for purposes of context).

The final example of a unique birth recorded in Scripture is that of Jesus Christ, the incarnate God. The creationist view runs toward the danger of Arius, the substitution of the Logos for the human soul of Jesus. The traducian view retains the full humanity of Jesus as derived from Mary, while avoiding the continuance of Adam’s sin through the bypassing of Joseph as Jesus’ father. In each example, it seems, the traducian view has the stronger bid to properly explain the nature of the derived being, be it Eve, or Seth, or Jesus. The evidence from biblical data is inconclusive however, and the argument in favor of the traducian view falls back again on the insuperable problem the creationist view has with regard to the doctrine of Original Sin.

Session 7: By Nature Children of Wrath

Scripture Text: Ephesians 2:1 - 3

“The faded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state in all respects of this temple, too plainly show that the Great Inhabitant is gone.”
(John Howe, *The Living Temple*)¹²⁶

Modern liberal theologians and preachers have accused the Apostle Paul of being a misogynist, because of his teachings concerning the role of women as subordinate to man. To this errant view we might as well as *misanthrope*, because of Paul’s teachings concerning man himself. He has little, if anything, good to say about fallen man. The classic litany of human depravity is, of course, found in Romans chapter 3.

*There is none righteous, no, not one;
There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one.
Their throat is an open tomb;
With their tongues they have practiced deceit;
The poison of asps is under their lips;
Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
Their feet are swift to shed blood;
Destruction and misery are in their ways;
And the way of peace they have not known.
There is no fear of God before their eyes.* (Romans 3:10-18)

This description of man in sin forms the framework for the Reformed doctrine of Total Depravity, summarized in classic fashion by the following from the Westminster Confession of Faith. Speaking of mankind’s inheritance from Adam’s primal sin, the theologians of the Westminster Assembly wrote,

¹²⁶ Quoted by John Laidlaw, *The Bible Doctrine of Man*; 232.

By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion, with God, and so became dead in sin, and **wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.**¹²⁷

One of the first caveats that must be set forth with regard to the Reformed doctrine of Total Depravity has to do with man's *natural* abilities, which are often and undeniably astounding. Reformed theology does not maintain – against the facts of history and personal experience – that man is incapable of all 'good' with respect to his society among men. Nor is it the content of the doctrine to deny that man is capable, even in his fallen state, to perform acts of recognizable kindness or benevolence toward his fellow man. Furthermore, Reformed theologians have consistently acknowledged man's ability to perform remarkable feats of intellectual and creative production. The Reformed doctrine of Total Depravity does not reduce man to the level of the irrational beast, for then he would no longer bear (no pun intended) responsibility for his continuation in sin. Rather it is the uniform teaching of Reformed anthropology, that the residual abilities of man – social, intellectual, and creative – are all vestiges of a former glory. The heights to which fallen man often attains in acts of benevolence, displays of intellectual genius, and artistic sublimity all merely point out the unutterable height from which mankind has fallen.

But as the opponent of the doctrine of Total Depravity seeks to prove man's continued 'goodness' by virtue of such acts of social, intellectual, and/or creative excellence, the Reformed theologian – as well as the historian – merely points out the fact that such occurrences are universally acknowledged as *exceptions*. While the doctrine of depravity itself does not teach the entire and total corruption of man's natural faculties, the experience of human history and of contemporary events nonetheless proves that mankind's natural capacity has been severely impaired by sin; and certainly not improved by it. The Reformed theologian follows the path of human development, guided by the biblical anthropology, to the conclusion that the uniqueness of human excellence – and the pervasive character of mankind's mediocrity

¹²⁷ WCF VI.II, http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/

or downright perversion – is caused by a corruption of the human psyche far deeper than the mere intellect or artistic capacity. John Laidlaw writes,

...man though fallen is still in a natural sense constituted in the image of God, but that in a spiritual sense that constitution is through sin totally ruined; and hence, that though the natural powers and faculties have still the stamp of God, and are not in themselves sinful, they are all indirectly under sin's power, and suffer from its effects.¹²⁸

The doctrine of Total Depravity, therefore, does not speak to the comparative 'goodness' or ability of man among men, but to the utter inability of man with respect to God his Maker, and to the purpose for which he was made. It speaks of sin's corruption at the center or core of man's being, without attempting to codify and standardize sin's effects in the periphery of thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Biblically stated, the heart of fallen man is "*desperately wicked*" and "*only evil always.*" That some men give greater vent to this wickedness than others does not negate the evident reality that a measure of this wickedness resides in the deepest regions of every man. Again, Laidlaw,

The Scripture doctrine of corruption, therefore, in accordance with its own simply psychology, is this, that the heart, *i.e.*, the fountain of man's being, is corrupt, and therefore all its actings, or, as we should say, the whole soul in all its powers and faculties, perverted.¹²⁹

In accordance with the tripartite view of human nature, we have sought to understand this depravity of man as a reorientation of the life of man, represented foremost by the soul ("*and he became a living soul*") away from the higher, spiritual life and downward to a sensual, physical life. Delitzsch describes the condition of fallen man thus,

The spirit which was breathed into man was, indeed, the condition of life to his body. But life, light, and love, are throughout the whole Scripture, ideas that are interwoven one in the other. Departed from the love of God, the spirit had thus become incapable of

¹²⁸ Laidlaw; 230.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*; 227.

being the principle of life and of glorification to the body. Instead of the life that aspired to glorification, had appeared a life that was sinking back downwards to corruption.¹³⁰

The consistent teaching of the tripartite view concerning Adam's primal sin, is that in the day that Adam sinned, his spirit died and lost its vital connection with God as his source and motivation of life. The life of the soul – the 'natural' or *psychical* according to Paul – became the dominant life force, though only a smoldering wick compared to the life of the spirit. "In consequence of the first sin, the internal nature of man became possessed by death, by the dissolution of the previous unity of the manifold powers interwoven in the life of the spirit and of the soul; and, by the disappearance of the spiritual life in God's image, and its reflection in the soul."¹³¹ This condition of spiritual death, and of *psychical* life, is thus passed from generation to generation, *ex traduce* (literally, out of the vine or root).

[Scripture] teaches that all our race, in consequence of the first transgression, is in a sinful state, which by natural descent passes over from parents to their children, and makes us deserving of God's holy displeasure. Because all have sprung from Adam, all are with him subject to sin and death.¹³²

Thus every child conceived by natural generation is thus conceived in a condition of spiritual deadness and moral depravity. J. B. Heard uses the terms 'dead' and 'dormant' interchangeably with regard to man's spirit as a result of Adam's fall, probably attempting to describe an impotent and incapacitated spirit while also recognizing that spirits do not 'die' in the common sense of the term. He speaks of every child born as "a fallen man, with a depraved sense-consciousness, a darkened self-consciousness, and a dead or dormant God-consciousness."¹³³

It this view of the child in the womb a biblical one? We have already seen the notable similarity of Seth to Adam, described in the same terminology as the *imago Dei*

¹³⁰ Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*; 151.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*; 153.

¹³² Van Oosterzie, *Christian Dogmatics*; 409.

¹³³ Heard, *Tripartite Nature of Man*, 102.

with regard to Adam himself. Also there is the famous passage from David's psalm of repentance, Psalm 51.

*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.* (Psalm 51:5)

Also from the Wisdom literature, we find that man is the source of trouble in the world; sin is not something that comes from man's environment, but rather from man himself.

*For affliction does not come from the dust,
Nor does trouble sprout from the ground,
For man is born for trouble,
As sparks fly upward.* (Job 5:6-7)

From the Old Testament we add God's own diagnosis of mankind's corrupt condition, both before and after the Flood: not only are the thoughts and intentions of man's heart "*only evil always*" (Gen. 6:5), this condition exist from man's youth (Gen. 8:21).

Of course it is with the advent of the New Testament writings, and particularly those of the Apostle Paul, that we find developed a full and clear anthropology, one that elaborates and confirms the doctrine of Total Depravity and of Original Sin. Along with the concatenation of Old Testament verses pulled together in Romans 3 – an irrefutable testimony to the utter depravity of man's soul – we also have a passage in Ephesians that ties the moral depravity of all men to their 'deadness' because of Adam's primal sin.

*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were **by nature children of wrath**, even as the rest.* (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Paul makes a connection here between the characteristics “*dead in your trespasses and sins*” and “*by nature children of wrath.*” The parallel is complete: those who are dead in their trespasses and sins are by nature children of wrath. And the biblical teaching is that this sentence describes all who are descended from Adam by ‘normal generation,’ that is, all who are born of a father and a mother. The second phrase, “*children of wrath,*” however, has caused a fair amount of controversy within and toward the Reformed doctrine of Total Depravity and of Original Sin. The controversy was more acute in times past, when infant mortality was far more prevalent than it is today, and to a large extent it has become more of an academic objection by those who seek to find injustice with God – or at least with Reformed theology. Simply put, the controversy surrounds God’s treatment of children who die in infancy, before the ‘age of accountability’ and before they are old enough to *willingly* sin.

Understandably, Reformed theologians have equivocated on this sensitive issue, with few pronouncing dogmatically the *guilt* of children who die in infancy. John Laidlaw assumes that “guiltiness in the ‘nature’ is the necessary correlative of ‘wrath.’”¹³⁴ This is, indeed, the most literal interpretation of Paul’s phrase, “*by nature children of wrath*”: to be subject to divine wrath certainly implies guilt. Thus Laidlaw concludes, “that original sin is no mere disease nor flaw in our origin, but is really sinful; that inborn depravity is not only an evil and a sickness, but entails guilt.”¹³⁵ Laidlaw echoes the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith, long considered the standard creed of Reformed theology.

The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell, consists of **the guilt of Adam’s first sin**, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Laidlaw; 222.

¹³⁵ *Idem.*

¹³⁶ Quoted by Dabney; 321.

This interpretation hinges on a somewhat simplistic view of the term ‘children’ as applying to the entirety of the human race, including infants (and, by extension, the child in the womb). But the term itself (Greek *teknon*) is frequently used simply to denote descent, as in the ‘*children of Israel*’ meaning all those who descend from Jacob, and could be a general reference to the human race without specifying distinctions within it. Paul is not making a dogmatic statement concerning the *guilt* associated with original sin as it applies to those who have not also sinned by an exercise of their own will. Rather, he is setting forth the *natural condition* of all mankind born of normal generation, as the children of fallen Adam. There are a few enigmatic passages in Scripture that indicate that perhaps the ‘children’ in Ephesians 2 ought not be rigidly applied so as to include infants.

First, there is the fairly clear statement from James that “*he who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, it is sin.*”¹³⁷ This passage perhaps sheds light on the saying in Romans, reviewed briefly in our last lesson, concerning death reigning over “*those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam.*”

...for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam... (Romans 5:13-14)

In addition to these passages, we also have indications with regard to both unborn children and children who die in infancy, that the culpability of Adam’s sin has not been imputed to them, though the consequence of that sin most certainly has. David’s child with Bathsheba died, we are inclined from the narrative to believe, very young. Though there is no explicit statement from Scripture as to the boy’s age when he died, the natural reading of the story leaves one thinking that he was quite young, perhaps still an infant. In any event, there is certainly no record of the boy having grown to the ‘age of accountability.’ Yet his father David seems to be quite sure of the boy’s destiny, and believes the child to have gone before the father into blessedness –

¹³⁷ James 4:17.

unless, for some reason, we assume that David doubted his own security in the Lord. Upon hearing of the boy's death, David says, *"I shall go to him, but he shall not come to me."*¹³⁸

Another passage that is perhaps a little more convincing as to the guiltlessness of children, at least in the womb, is found in Paul's classic treatise concerning election. Referring to God's selection of Jacob over Esau, the apostle writes,

...for though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, "THE OLDER WILL SERVE THE YOUNGER."

(Romans 9:11-12)

The main thrust of this verse within its context, of course, is the sovereignty of God in election. But it is interesting that Paul notes that the two boys, while in their mother's womb, *"had not done anything good or bad."* The implication is that neither boy had incurred guilt, just as neither child had merited favor. The latter point is emphasized most frequently, but the former is just as true. Jacob had done nothing to merit divine, covenantal grace; but neither had Esau done anything to deserve divine displeasure and wrath. The choice of one over the other was *"so that God's purpose according to election would stand."* The sequel proves that both boys turned out to be sinners, and from the record of their respective lives, it is impossible to say that one was a greater sinner than the other.

When we piece these various portions of Scripture together, and add one more from Romans 7, we begin to form an indissoluble connection between the *guilt* of sin and the knowledge of the law. Whether that 'law' is in all cases the Torah delivered through Moses, or whether - as seems to be taught by Paul in Romans 2 - it also consists of the law of 'conscience' in every man, is a matter for later discussion. As it pertains to the infant, or to the mentally impaired, or to the miscarriage or abortion, or simply the child before the 'age of accountability,' we have the personal testimony of Paul to contend with.

¹³⁸ II Samuel 12:23

Man: The Crux of Creation

I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

(Romans 7:9-11)

Consider the progression the apostle lays out in these verses:

I was alive

apart from the Law

the commandment came

sin became alive

I died

Robert Louis Dabney, as staunch a defender of the doctrines of Original Sin and of Total Depravity as any theologian in the history of the church, nevertheless makes a distinction between sin in its essence and the guilt of sin as its consequence. Dabney writes,

Actual guilt is obligation to punishment. This is the established technical sense of the word among theologians. Guilt, thus defined, is obviously not of the essence of sin; but is a relation, viz., to the penal sanction of law. For if we suppose no penal sanction attached to the disregard of moral relations, guilt would not exist, though there were sin.¹³⁹



R. L. Dabney (1820-98)

Thus the view of many Reformed theologians is that the just imputation of sin as guilt, requires both the presence and the knowledge of the moral obligation violated. In common everyday life, a person who gets a speeding ticket may justly (and probably successfully) contest the citation if the speed limit sign was not present. The person *was* speeding, but would usually not be held

guilty if there was no way of the driver *knowing* the speed limit on that stretch of road. Applied to man's relation to sin against God, this is simply reiterating what James states

¹³⁹ Dabney, *Systematic Theology*; 310.

“to him who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.” The presence and reality of sin is within every human being born of natural generation, inherited from mankind’s common father Adam in consequence of his primal sin. This is often called the taint of sin, and constitutes the universal corruption of human nature and the universal consequence of sin, which is death.¹⁴⁰ *“Thus death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam.”* But what the Westminster Confession assumes, and what most Reformed theologians teach, that *taint* and *guilt* are equal characteristics of original sin, is not necessarily true. J. J. van Oosterzie, himself a Reformed theologian of good repute, writes, “An immediate imputation of Adam’s sin itself, as a personal guilt even of the new-born babe and the ignorant heathen, is nowhere taught by the Gospel.”¹⁴¹

Van Oosterzie broadens the category a bit too wide, to include ‘ignorant heathen.’ However, according to Romans 1, there is no such thing as an *ignorant* heathen; a fact that we will address shortly in terms of the biblical teaching on conscience. But if we let his words stand with regard to the new-born babe, and again by extension the child in the womb (and logically also to the mentally retarded), then we must conclude that there is an ‘age of accountability’ at which every child arrives at the *guilt* of sin. This concept means far more than the way it is most frequently used in modern evangelical churches – that is, the age at which parents and the leadership of the congregation can ‘accept’ the profession of faith of a child; the age at which the child ‘understand’ the Gospel. A biblical ‘age of accountability’ is the time at which the child incurs guilt before God through personal rebellion: sinning in the likeness of Adam, as it were.

The topic of an ‘age of accountability’ takes us back to that statement by Paul in Romans 7, *“I once was alive apart from the Law,”* referred to above. Herman Ridderbos, in

¹⁴⁰ This view should not be confused with the Roman Catholic teaching on nature concupiscence, or the natural repugnance of every human child due to the loss of the superadded gift of grace given at Creation to Adam. In the Reformed view, this taint is the essential characteristic of humanity in consequence of the primal sin of Adam, and passed naturally from generation to generation.

¹⁴¹ Van Oosterzie; 410.

his analysis of Paul's thought on the Law and sin, focuses on the latter two-thirds of Romans 7:9, that is, the Law coming and sin becoming alive, resulting in Paul's death. In expositing the passage, Ridderbos avoids entirely the opening clause, *I was once alive apart from the Law...* and deals directly with the relationship of the advent of the Law to the rise of sin.

Thus death works itself out in the sinful life of man. Romans 7:9, 10 speaks of that in a very telling and explicit manner: 'when the commandment came, sin began to live, but I began to die; and the commandment which is unto life, this I found to be unto death.'¹⁴²

Without dealing directly with the first clause of Romans 7:9, Ridderbos does seem to indicate that this moment in Paul's life is truly an essential change in the status of the person, signifying more than merely a heightened awareness of one's sin. He continues, "This 'dying' is not to be taken as introspection, acquiring an eye for guilt and punishment, but the sin-ruled condition of his existence, which can be called dying because it is cut off from the true life for God."¹⁴³

Some have interpreted Paul's statement about being "*once alive*" metaphorically. John Gill denies that Paul is speaking of himself as when he was an infant, but rather refers to himself as a Pharisee. Gill writes, "the apostle is speaking of himself, and that not as in his state of infancy before he could discern between good and evil, but when grown up, and whilst a Pharisee; who, though he was born under the law, was brought up and more perfectly instructed in it than the common people were, and was a strict observer of it, yet was without the knowledge of the spirituality of it."¹⁴⁴



John Gill (1697 – 1771)

Gill believes that Paul's being "*alive apart from the Law*" refers only to his complacency as a Pharisee, before the true nature of the Law manifested itself to Paul in the Gospel. If this is true, however, then Paul was not dead for very long, for it was a

¹⁴² Ridderbos, Herman *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; 1975); 113.

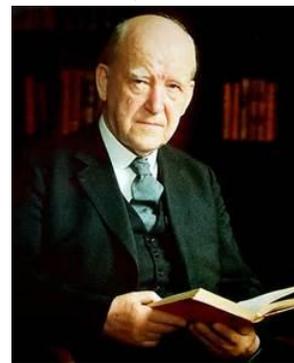
¹⁴³ *Idem.*

¹⁴⁴ Gill, John *Exposition of the Bible*; en loc. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/romans-7-9.html>

very short time from his epiphany on the road to Damascus and his conversion – a matter of days at the most, and perhaps far less time than that. No, it does not seem reasonable to interpret being “*alive once apart from the Law*” as referring to a period of Paul’s life when the Law itself was the chief object of his study and devotion. That the Law did not reach into the heart of Saul of Tarsus during those long years of study, is due to the fact that he *was dead*; when the true nature of the Law manifested itself to the soon-to-be-apostle, he finally came to life in Jesus Christ. Gill seems to have the chronology wrong here.

Lloyd-Jones utilizes a ‘relative’ interpretation to Paul’s use of the advent of the Law, maintaining that while the Law was always present, it was not always so to Paul. Consider Lloyd-Jones interpretation, and ask whether it does not suffer the same chronological inversion as does Gill’s analysis.

Let us move to the next term, which is, "When the commandment came, sin revived and I died." "When the commandment came!" But the commandment had always been there! The Law had been given through Moses long centuries before Paul was ever born--fourteen centuries--and the basic fundamental law for all mankind was always there from the beginning. Yet he says, "When the commandment came." Again Paul is speaking relatively. He means that though the commandment was there it had never "come" to him, it had never "got" him. Let me give a very simple illustration of what that means. People sometimes come to a preacher at the end of a service and say, "You know I had never noticed that verse before," or they may say, "You know, I have read that verse a thousand times and more, but I had never seen it." What they really mean is that that statement had never really "come" to them before. We have all had that experience as we read the Bible. You are reading a verse which you have read many, many times before, and which has said nothing to you; but suddenly it "hits" you, suddenly it seems to be illuminated, and to stand out. What has happened? Well, it has "come" to you. That is what the Apostle means by "When the commandment came." It was always there, as the Scripture was always there, but it did not "get" him, it did not "take hold of him," it did not really speak to him. It did not come, in other words, with power and conviction and understanding.¹⁴⁵



D. M. Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

¹⁴⁵ <http://www.gospeltruth.net/ljrom7.htm#7:9>

What few commentators want to do is take Paul's words at face value: that there was a time in his life when he was 'alive' apart from the Law. Paul himself, in Romans 2 and elsewhere, indicates his firm belief that each man's conscience is a law to himself and one that is sufficient to condemn or exonerate. Paul had a conscience long before he became a Christian. Furthermore, as a Pharisee he was a devout student of the Law. To say that the Pharisees as a class were unaware of sin because they did not fully understand the content or import of the Law, is simply ludicrous. Rabbinic teachings manifest a clear awareness of personal sin, and no doubt Paul was personally aware of his sin while he was a Pharisee. The only time in Paul's life at which he was naturally and 'innocently' unaware of the Law had to be when he was a child, a young child.

Paul uses the example of the 10th Commandment, against coveting, as a personal initiation into the knowledge of sin through the law.

What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead.

(Romans 7:7-8)

Coveting is not the universal introductory sin (though it does seem to manifest itself pretty early in a child's life!). Paul is proving the point that he is making, "for apart from the Law sin is dead." This statement itself requires analysis far beyond the scope of our current discussion, which has to do with the concept of an 'age of accountability.' Pulling together Paul's teaching in Romans 7 and Romans 5, and adding the comment from James' epistle concerning knowledge of the right thing, we may tentatively conclude that there is a time in which the taint of sin transfers into the guilt of sin; when being susceptible to death becomes liability to judgment. That every child 'dies' when the Law comes in, derives from the original corruption of human nature through Adam's primal sin, and illustrates the power of the Law to work condemnation. "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law."¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ I Corinthians 15:56

But what of the heathen? What of the nations outside the commonwealth of Israel, to whom the Law was not given? Are these millions of men still guilty for their sins, 'apart from the Law'? Elsewhere in Romans Paul seems to give us an affirmative answer. He begins in chapter 1 by laying all men under the condemnation of rejecting the God of Creation, choosing rather to worship the creature. Theologians and philosophers have called this a sin 'against the light of nature,' but have traditionally (within the Christian sphere, at least), recognized it as culpable sin. Paul is unequivocal as to the guilt of man's rejection of his Creator.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. (Romans 1:18-20)

Later, in Romans 2, the apostle establishes that all men will be judged according to their deeds (2:6), regardless of whether they were privileged with the Law of Moses. "For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law." (2:12) The arbiter in the case of the man 'under the Law' and the man 'without the Law' is the same: the conscience.

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:14-16)

The conscience of man is universal, alike to Gentile as well as Jew. The uniformity of laws among societies across time and across the world indicates, from a biblical viewpoint, the vestige of the pure knowledge of God with which man was first created. Along with the natural talents and intellectual abilities that mankind still possesses (though excess of either is rare and noteworthy), there is also the innate awareness of a moral code - a 'law' - that either condemns or exonerates each

individual according to his deeds. The Law of Moses intensified this judgment, and with it the condemnation. But it would be a misinterpretation of Paul to conclude that the heathen who live and die *without the Law* are thereby without the guilt of sin.

If there be a class of mankind who are without the guilt of sin – and the passages collected here are too sparse to form a dogmatic conclusion on the matter – it would have to contain infants and children still in the womb, as well perhaps as those born with severe mental retardation (though it is in this case impossible to know what the mentally retarded persons knows concerning the issues of conscience). If we consider the first sin, and the immediate response of Adam and Eve to their eyes being ‘opened,’ we may find the ‘age of accountability’ to be more obvious than we ever considered. It is often considered a loss of innocence when a child first notices his or her nakedness as something to be ashamed of, and begins immediately to seek privacy from others. This phenomenon does not occur in each child at exactly the same age, but it is certainly a nearly universal event in the life of every child.¹⁴⁷ While no dogmatic statement can be made on the matter, it provides parents of young children somewhat of a bellwether as to the moral development of their child.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Nakedness’ here refers to the genitalia. Different culture have different mores with regard to the exposure of the breasts, but I am not aware of a civilization in the world or in history in which exposure of the genitalia was considered anything but shameful nakedness. If such societies exist or existed, one may conclude that the exception proves the rule.

Session 8: "You Must Be Born Again"

Scripture Text: John 3:1 - 8; II Corinthians 5:17

*"The Holy Spirit is not given as a sanctifying spirit,
until he has been given as a regenerating spirit."
(William G. T. Shedd)*

We have maintained through this study, that the best anthropological interpretation of the biblical evidence will be that one which best answers to the various circumstances and examples we encounter, both in the Scriptures and in life's experiences. It stands to reason that the theory that has to be significantly modified and adjusted when one moves from the Fall of Adam or the creation/formation of Eve, to the birth of Seth, to the Incarnation of Christ, etc., is probably a theory built on a foundation of shifting sand, and ought to be re-examined at its core. Biblical doctrines such as Original Sin and Total Depravity, as well, must fit naturally into a biblical anthropology, without constantly having to square the theological circles in order to make one's theory fit. Too often an appeal is made to divine omnipotence - *it is so because God says it is so* - or 'mystery' - *this is beyond our finite understanding* - whenever a particular theory fails to answer to a particular situation. But appeals to mystery or divine absolutism are only valid (1) when the view does not involve an apparent contradiction and (2) when insufficient data is provided by Scripture. Oliver Crisp writes,

Appealing to divine mystery is only appropriate when the conditions under which the purported example of mystery arises do not themselves yield a contradiction - in other words, where we have conditions that are not obviously incoherent when conjoined, or do not necessarily admit of contradiction, although it is unclear how they might be conjoined without raising serious intellectual difficulties pertaining to the consistence of what is being affirmed *in the absence of further information*.¹⁴⁸

Another common hermeneutical evasion is the appeal to metaphor or figure of speech, as we witnessed in several commentators with regard to Paul's statement in

¹⁴⁸ Crisp, *An American Augustinian*; 235-236, italics his.

Romans 7:9, "*I was once alive apart from the law...*" Metaphor and other figures of speech undoubtedly exist in Scripture – in large quantity. But the same guidelines may be applied to the introduction of metaphor into the exegesis of a passage as Crisp has written with regard to 'divine mystery.'

In short, the safest hermeneutic is to take Scripture literally where possible, and to build one's doctrines in proportion to the biblical data. The patterns of metaphor are themselves fairly evident in the Bible, and may be followed in conjunction with the different genre – prophecy, poetry, wisdom, apocalyptic. Mystery is also present – as Deuteronomy 29:29 reminds us. But there is also a great deal of information concerning much that we study under the rubrics of Theology Proper, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, etc., so that we need not fall back on evasions simply because a particular theological framework cannot be made to accommodate a theological problem. "Theology is human reflection upon the deposit of divine revelation."¹⁴⁹ As such it is subject to examination – *must be* subject to examination – in every generation.

Nowhere in biblical anthropology is the appeal to 'mystery' and 'metaphor' more of an exegetical and theological phenomenon than in the discussion of *regeneration*. Here modern theologians seem to be no wiser than Nicodemus: "*How can these things be?*" And here our Lord may well answer, as He did to Nicodemus, "*Are you the teacher of the Church, and do not understand these things?*" This is not to say that the miracle of regeneration is susceptible to full and comprehensive understanding. But it is to say that, with the doctrine of regeneration, we are presented with another *test case* for any biblical anthropology – and the one that is formed closest to the biblical teaching will make the most sense of the biblical data, with the fewest appeals to 'mystery' and 'metaphor.' For in regeneration we come to the mirror of the fall of Adam, and ask the reverse question to the one we asked in that former circumstance. At that point the question was, "What was it in Adam that died when he sinned?" Here the question becomes, "What is it that *comes alive* when the sinner is regenerated?" If the biblical

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; 255.

anthropology that we have been setting forth thus far is even remotely correct, it would seem the answer to each question would be the same.

Two passages stand out with regard to the biblical concept called *regeneration*. The first is Jesus' interview with Nicodemus, recorded in John 3; the second is from the apostle Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, in particular II Corinthians 5:17. There are many other passages that shed additional light, but these two form a solid foundation upon which to begin. We begin then with John 3.

*Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again** he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

(vv. 1-3)

The operative phrase here is, of course, *born again*, which is the standard Greek word for 'to be born,' coupled with the modifier *another* (ἄνωθεν). This modifier literally means 'from above,' but Nicodemus' immediate response shows that it also had the sense of 'again,' "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" At the very least, the Pharisee's reply indicates his interpretation of Jesus' startling words in terms of a radical change, a second birth. But Jesus' second statement seems to return us to the more literal sense of the Greek word, *another*,

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

(vv. 5-7)

The heart of Jesus' teaching is in verse 6, "that which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of spirit is spirit." Here is the dichotomy, the opposition between those who will see the Kingdom of God and those who will not: born of *flesh* versus born of *spirit*. But before we jump ahead into the spiritual birth of which Jesus speaks, we must first

deal with the other class of being - *flesh* - which becomes a very significant anthropological term in the New Testament.

What is the New Testament Meaning of 'Flesh'?

The word translated 'flesh' in John 3:6 is *sarkos* (σὰρξ), which is a generic term for the corporeal form of living beings - in other words, the body. When God took from Adam's side in order to form Eve, He closed up the *flesh* thereof. Upon first meeting his wife, Adam then said, "this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." In both instances the word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament is *sarkos*. Throughout the Flood narrative, the word is used essentially synonymous with human life, "Then God said to Noah, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me'" (6:13), where the Septuagint translates the same Hebrew word as in Genesis 2 with *anthropos*, or man. The idea of 'flesh' in the Old Testament, therefore, was simply an emphasis on his mortal frame, his organic composition, his body.

But in the New Testament the term *sarkos* gains a deeper meaning; one that moves beyond simply the corporeal aspect of living beings into the semi-spiritual, soulish, immaterial realm of human nature. In John 1:13 the *sarkos* is referred to as having a will, though not such a will as capable of producing a child of God.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)

A survey of the usage of *sarkos* in the New Testament, and particularly in the Pauline writings, will clearly show that the term can no longer be defined within strictly material boundaries, but must be broadened to incorporate immaterial aspects of human nature - and uniformly the evil ones, at that. "The entire natural man is called σαρκίς (*sarx*), because he has fallen absolutely into the power of the evil potentialities of his fundamental nature, which the original sin has set free."¹⁵⁰ Thus,

¹⁵⁰ Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*; 439.

even though Paul may still use the term in its more generic, material sense – as in Romans 1:3 – he more frequently assigns to it a negative connotation of sinfulness, in contrast with the spirit. Compare:

Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh...

(Romans 1:1-3)

With:

For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

(Romans 7:5-6)

In the latter passage, as commonly in Paul, “‘flesh’ becomes identified with the



Herman Ridderbos (1909-2007)

force or principle of sin in fallen nature, and ‘spirit’ with the principle of spiritual life in the new creature.”¹⁵¹ Ridderbos summarizes Paul’s usage, “‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ represent two modes of existence, on the one hand that of the old aeon which is characterized and determined by the flesh, on the other that of the new creation which is of the Spirit of God.”¹⁵² We cannot say that the term *sarkos* is as heavily loaded in Jesus’ discussion

with Nicodemus, as it came to be in Paul’s more theologically complete analyses of human nature. But in Jesus we do find the concept of ‘like begetting like,’ with the same contrast between ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’ later found in Paul. “Truly, truly, I say to you, that which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of spirit is spirit.” It is evident the first phrase constitutes what Nicodemus *is*, and the second what he *must become* if he is to see the Kingdom of God.

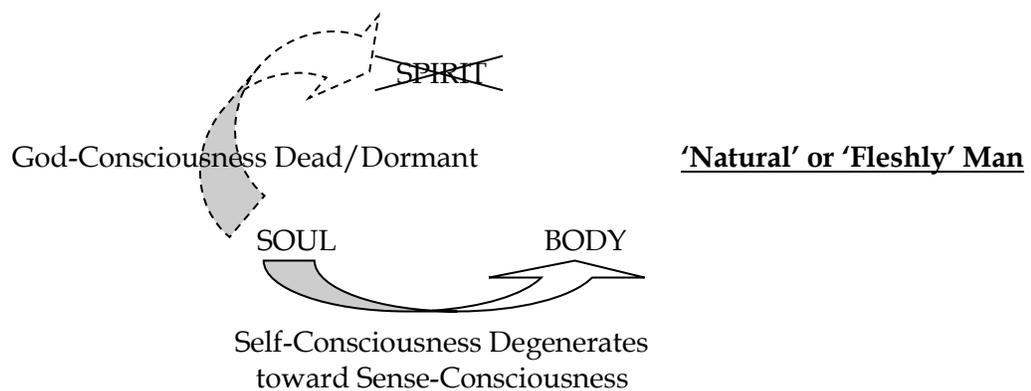
¹⁵¹ Laidlaw; 271.

¹⁵² Ridderbos, Herman *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans; 1975); 66.

This usage of the term *sarkos* by Jesus and Paul is similar to Paul's usage of 'soulish,' or *natural*, - *psuchikos* - in I Corinthians 2:14. The contrast is between man in his fallen state and man as regenerate,

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. (I Corinthians 2:14-15)

The man who needs to be 'born from above' is the man who has been 'born of the flesh,' and consequently is fleshly. He is the same as the 'natural' man to which Paul refers. This man must be 'born of the spirit' and become 'spiritual.' In light of our previous discussions concerning the doctrine of Original Sin, and the propagation of sin in the descendents of Adam, we can now analyze the theories of Tripartitism and Traducianism with respect to the New Testament teaching on the *flesh* and the *spirit*. Tripartitism teaches that it is the spirit in man that died in Adam, and that "The mystery of human nature seems to lie in this, that men are born into the world with a living body and soul, but with a dead or dormant spirit."¹⁵³ The anatomy we have proposed of fallen man sets up a degenerate orientation of the human soul to the sensual desires of the body, with the dead or dormant spirit no longer exerting any positive influence or attraction whatsoever.



This diagram illustrates the one 'born of the flesh,' who is none other than every man born of Adam by natural generation. It is important that the platonic mistake of

¹⁵³ Heard; 201.

assigning evil strictly to the material aspect of man not be made in regard to the New Testament usage of 'flesh.' Van Oosterzie writes in regard to Paul's usage of the term,

And even by flesh the apostle does not mean sensuality, but the entire sinful nature of man, to which belong not only the body, but the understanding, feeling, and will also, and which as such stands in direct opposition to the renewed spiritual principle by which the Christian is led.¹⁵⁴

The spirit is dead because of sin, but the soul is alive because of the principle of life and of propagation imbued in Adam when first created. This tripartite view of human nature adequately describes the powerlessness of fallen man to reorient himself toward God, while also powerfully explaining the steady degeneration of every man's life as his self-consciousness is regressively moving toward his sense-consciousness, without interruption, all the years of his existence on earth. Is it any wonder that Jesus told Nicodemus, "*You must be born again*"?

This analysis of the flesh and the spirit under the rubric of the tripartite nature of man also enables us to understand more clearly what Jesus means when He says, "*you must be born **from above***." Clearly this is equivalent to being "*born of spirit*" and can only refer to regeneration itself. The comment Jesus makes in the middle of this dialogue with Nicodemus, refers to an Old Testament prophecy with which the Pharisee ought to have been familiar, and should have understood.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'
(John 3:5-7)

Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.
(Ezekiel 36:25-27)

¹⁵⁴ Van Oosterzie, *Christian Dogmatics*; 398.

The center of the activity with regard to God's act upon the sinner in regeneration is *the heart*. But it must be carefully observed that the nature of man – that is, his *human* nature – is not changed in regeneration. “It is clear that, according to Scripture, neither the Fall on the one hand nor Regeneration on the other can be regarded as effecting a change in the substance of human nature.”¹⁵⁵ Adam was still Adam, and was still human, after the Fall. And the sinner in Regeneration, is still the same person he was before this mysterious new birth takes place. Again, the theory of tripartitism seems best to answer this phenomenon.

Just as we discussed the fact that Adam did not die bodily when he first sinned, nor did his rational faculties change into another being – his *soul* remained the same as it was before his sin – so we can similarly analyze the sinner who experiences regeneration. Certainly no one would claim that a change takes place in the *body* of the sinner saved by grace. Indeed, the regenerate person is still very liable to bodily death. The *soul*, as well, undergoes no substantial change in regeneration; the person is still the same person he was before, often little changed by the experience of regeneration insofar as his intellect, his emotions, his ‘personality’ are concerned. Prior to the regenerative work of God, the sinner is “*dead in his trespasses and sins.*” God “*makes him alive*” through regeneration. So what is it that comes alive, if not the spirit of the man?

This, too, fits in well with the literal meaning of the word Jesus uses, *anōthen*, ‘from above.’ Regeneration is another instance of divine creation, and is also analogous to the initial formation of Man as recorded in Genesis 2:7. In the case of the sinner, however, the ‘clay’ is not inanimate earth, but rebellious soul. Nevertheless, there is no *life* in the true sense of that word; there is no vital connection between the fallen soul, the fleshly man, and the ‘breath of lives’ which comes only from God. It is perhaps in this sense that the author of Hebrews refers to God as “*the Father of spirits.*” Certainly the writer does not mean to indicate that God is not also the originator of the body of man; still less that every soul that lives does not belong to God. But the title *Father of*

¹⁵⁵ Laidlaw; 252.

spirits, at least to the tripartite view of human nature, cuts to the very core of true life, and of existence in the presence of God.

What Does it Mean to be Born Again?

We turn from Jesus dialogue with Nicodemus, which establishes the necessity of the new birth from above, to Paul's classic verse in II Corinthians 5:17, which describes the result of this miraculous rebirth, "*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, [he is] a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*" To what extent is Paul using figure of speech? To what extent are his words to be taken literally? We have already noted that regeneration does not alter the body or the soul of the sinner saved by grace. Thus in the natural sense, or the 'fleshly' sense of man's being, regeneration does not bring about a new creature, at least not immediately. Yet the apostle's words are definitive - similar in nature to the word of God regarding what would happen on the day in which Adam rebelled. Paul emphasizes a stark transition in this verse,

*If any man be in Christ,
He is a new creation*

*The old things have passed away
Behold, new things have come*

The transition from old to new pertains to the man who is 'in Christ,' which is uniformly taught in the New Testament to refer to the man who has been born again. The set of men who are 'regenerate' is coextensive with that of men who are 'in Christ,' and this in turn is coextensive with the set of men for whom 'new things have come' because they are 'new creatures.' But in light of the continuation of the same 'old' body, and apparently also the same 'old' soul, is there any way to take Paul's words at face value, or must they be interpreted as figures of speech? Laidlaw assigns the newness of the new birth to a 'principle,' and in doing so represents a common view among theologians. Speaking of regeneration, he writes, "It is the infusion of a new principle under which man exercises all the powers and faculties he has by nature in a new

way.”¹⁵⁶ In other words, what is ‘new’ about the regenerate man is the guiding principle of his life, which is now oriented toward God where once it was oriented toward self. Laidlaw continues,

So this new spiritual sense is not a new faculty of understanding, but it is a new foundation laid in the nature of the soul for a new kind of exercises of the same faculty of understanding...Deeper than consciousness and will, the Spirit produces in regeneration that new abiding state, disposition, principle, or habit, which constitutes the regenerated character, which gives it stability and perseverance, and which makes the renewed man’s walk and conversation to be what they are.¹⁵⁷

This is true, as far as it goes, but does it go as far as Paul in II Corinthians 5:17? Does a new ‘principle’ constitute a new ‘creation’? Laidlaw uses the term ‘new’ quite frequently in this section of his work, but he avoids using the Pauline phrase, ‘new creation.’ All that he says about the regenerate man’s new foundation, new ability, new sense, is true enough, but there seems to be lacking any semblance of a view to the ‘new creation’ that the regenerate man has become in Christ.

On the tripartite view of human nature, especially as it pertains to the Fall of man, the creature derived from Adam by normal generation belongs to the specie known as *fallen man*. He is of ungodly stock, and corrupt nature, even before he is born or is able to exercise his own will in actual sin against God. The ‘clay’ of the human race, deriving as it does from the first man, Adam, cannot be otherwise than Adam caused it to be through his first sin. This is ‘creation’ as it came to be through Adam’s transgression, by the sovereign plan and purpose of God. Psychologically, every man born into this ‘creation’ is born with a dead or dormant spirit; his soul is oriented entirely in upon itself, and seeks its fulfillment in the gratification of the sensual or fleshly aspect of human existence. This ‘old creation’ is the realm of the ‘flesh,’ as both Jesus and Paul used that term to denote human nature in its sinful condition.

¹⁵⁶ Laidlaw; 257.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*; 258-260.

When a man is born again he receives a new spirit. It is not biblical to speak of his dead or dormant spirit 'coming alive,' but rather the whole man being 'made alive' who was once 'dead in trespass and sin.' Regeneration is not *resurrection* but *creation*. God promises in the Gospel of His Son to '*put a new spirit within you,*' and this is the divinely monergistic activity of regeneration.

Man is passive in regeneration. He cannot actively originate spiritual life. His relation to regeneration is that of a recipient...Between the carnal mind and the spiritual mind, there is nothing but the instant of regeneration. In this instant when the new life is imparted, the activity is solely that of God the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁸

The sense in which Paul therefore speaks of the regenerate man as 'new creation,' has reference entirely to the person of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, and not to the essential qualities or faculties of the individual who is born again. Even the phrasing of II Corinthians 5:17 points somewhat away from the individual to something greater, something of which he has now become a partaker through Jesus Christ. The operative term in verse 17 is *ktisis* (κτισις), and the subject/verb combination 'he is' does not actually show up in the Greek text. The phrase 'new creation' is emphatic,

If any man be in Christ – new creation! – the old things have passed away...

The impartation of a new spirit into the tripartite nature of fallen man is the infusion of new and true life, the life of the 'new creation' inaugurated through the person of Jesus Christ, the second Adam. This is the distinction that we have seen already in Jesus' "*that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.*" And this is coupled with Paul's description of the first Adam and second Adam in terms of their propagative powers,

So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (I Corinthians 15:45)

¹⁵⁸ Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*; 502.

Regeneration begins the reversal of what befell mankind when Adam first sinned. The digression at that time began with the immediate death of Adam's spirit – the separation of his spirit from the One who is life. This left Adam's soul to itself; self-consciousness became the guiding principle of human reasoning and will. In this respect Immanuel Kant's portrayal of man as essentially a sense preceptor is accurate: human nature, cut off from God through the spirit, has only the sensory faculties through which to perceive the world, and consequently, to form his opinions and his ambitions in the world. Thus man's soul degenerates, in some cases – well recorded in history – he falls into a condition hardly different from the beast (Psalm 49:20). Finally, the soul is removed from the body and physical death ensues. This is the condition of the 'old creation,' and constitutes 'that which is born of the flesh.'

Regeneration starts exactly where the Fall began, only in reverse: the regenerate man is given a new and living spirit, indwelt at once by the Holy Spirit of God. This in itself is an incomprehensible improvement over Adam's circumstances as first created. With the impartation of a living spirit, the regenerate man's soul is reoriented – quickly at first, perhaps, slowly and by fits and starts later – toward the spiritual understanding and knowledge of God. His God-consciousness begins to exert influence over his self-consciousness, and the thoughts and intentions of his heart are moved away from the flesh and toward the spirit. The name for this overall process which begins at regeneration is, of course, sanctification. This will be the topic of the next lesson.

Finally, the promised renewal of the body. This will only be experienced immediately by the generation alive at Christ's second coming. For all other believers there are two phases left to discuss: the Intermediate State and the Resurrection. In the last, the process will be complete, and the regenerate man will be as Christ is.

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

(I John 3:2-3)

Session 9: The Will of God: Even Your Sanctification

Scripture Text: Romans 7:14 – 8:11

*“But all who believe in Jesus Christ are destined to this new existence;
all shall be conformed to the image of the Son of God.
One is no longer determined by the flesh.”
(Gerd Theissen)*

Sanctification, particularly in its relationship to Justification, has been a hard theological nut over the past two millennia. The Roman Catholic teaching confounds the two, and teaches that the believer is only justified to the extent that he or she is sanctified. Since this process of sanctification is almost never finished in this life, the Roman Church makes provision for its completion in Purgatory. At the other end of the spectrum, the modern ‘Lordship’ teaching – which is simply the latest iteration of a chronic error throughout church history – holds that justification is completely free, while sanctification is costly. In addition, this particular brand of error teaches that sanctification is optional, and accrues rewards in heaven for the believer who chooses to undergo the rigorous work of being made holy. At the one end we have a theology that makes sanctification essential to justification; at the other end, we have an optional sanctification completely independent of justification. The first perspective tramples on the finished work of Jesus Christ; the second denigrates the on-going work of the Holy Spirit. Neither view comes close to properly interpreting and applying the teachings of the Apostle Paul, whose writings are both profound and thorough on the subjects of Justification and Sanctification.

The common evangelical view on Sanctification is that it is a progressive movement within the soul of the believer toward conformity to Jesus Christ. The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines it thus, “Sanctification is the work of God’s free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.”¹⁵⁹ Thus sanctification is seen primarily as an *enabling* grace from God, that gives power (ability –

¹⁵⁹ WSC Question 35.

dunamis) to the believer to obey God's commandments and to conquer sin in the flesh. Whereby justification is held to be a monergistic work of Almighty God, sanctification is generally viewed as cooperative: man empowered by divine grace within, yet responsible to "*work out his salvation with fear and trembling*" and to "*put to death the deeds of the flesh.*" While the Arminian will write books on 'how to be saved,' the Reformed will write them on 'how to be sanctified.' Though there is truth in the concept of 'participation' in sanctification - we dare not say 'cooperation' - the traditional view often makes sanctification into a work, which is the primary reason the 'Lordship' folks reject it as a necessary concomitant to justification.

In our study thus far we have established a biblical argument in favor of a tripartite view of human nature, concluding that the human spirit died in Adam when he first sinned, and is made alive again through regeneration by the Holy Spirit. The initial death, then propagated through the human race by manner of *ex traduce*, leaves the human soul dependent and drawn to the body: the psychical or 'natural' man is enslaved to the sensual appetites of the body. This 'complex' is referred to biblically as the 'flesh,' when that term is used in a moral sense as opposed to a mere physical or hereditary one. If this anthropology is correct, then regeneration is a revivification of the human spirit, immediately and graciously indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The process of degeneration is reversed, and the soul is drawn back toward the now living spirit. *This, we maintain, is Sanctification.* While it is everywhere admitted that this 'process' is never fully and finally perfected in this life, the tripartite view allows for the continuation of sanctification in the Intermediate State - the time between death and the resurrection - without having to resort to the human fiction of Purgatory. But that aspect must wait until the next lesson.

The Terminology of Sanctification:

Much of the confusion surrounding the doctrine of Christian Sanctification is due to the terminology employed, especially by Paul, with regard to the condition of the believer. Phrases like 'old man' and 'inner man,' as well as 'flesh' and 'carnal,' have

been interpreted simplistically as the believer having two men alive within him, both vying for the 'throne' of his heart. It has been said that crucifixion is a slow death, and so sanctification is a slow process of the 'new man' being made holy while constantly fighting the 'old man' for dominion of the will. Another view, recognizing that the 'old man' has died with Christ, treats sanctification as a 'new man' carrying about the corpse of the 'old man' on his shoulders. One can readily see the rationale for such views from the terminology employed by Paul, but for the most part they are incompatible with the Pauline anthropology and psychology...not to mention gruesome.

What is certain in the biblical account of sanctification – and this aspect is captured in most evangelical views of the doctrine – is that there is a *struggle* going on, an *opposition* within the believer that makes sanctification an often painful and frustrating process. In one of the classic passages on the subject, Paul writes in Galatians 5,

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

(Galatians 5:17)

Definitive Sanctification:

Thus any biblical treatment of the doctrine of Sanctification must deal honestly with the struggle. It must also recognize that this struggle is inevitable for the believer, and not an optional course taken by 'spiritual' Christians as opposed to 'carnal' ones. But, perhaps more difficult, it must encompass the equal truth of the *definitive sanctification* every believer already has in Jesus Christ. Again Paul writes, this time to the Corinthians (who, it seems, had a long way to go before they reached perfection),

And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.

(I Corinthians 6:11)

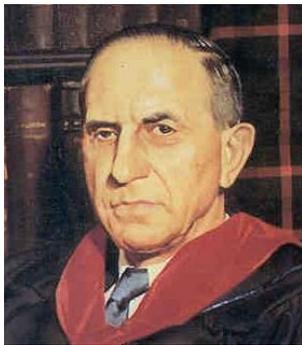
The concept of 'definitive sanctification' is also found powerfully in John's first epistle,

No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him...No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.
(I John 3:4, 9)

This statement by John is all the more remarkable when one considers what he had just written, only a few verses earlier,

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.
(I John 1:8, 10)

A fuller treatment of the doctrine of Definitive Sanctification belongs to the study of Christ and Salvation, for it is an essential facet of the concept of the believer being 'in Christ.' Yet it is crucial to any discussion of sanctification in its progressive nature – the



John Murray (1898-1975)

type of sanctification most believers are familiar with – to establish the biblical foundation upon which sanctification builds: *the finished work and ongoing intercession of Jesus Christ, the Sanctified.* Having “condemned sin in the flesh” (Rom. 8:3), the risen Jesus has rendered sin powerless within all for whom He died. In this sense, which is reality, all believers have also

‘condemned sin in the flesh,’ for sin has been defeated fully and finally by Jesus Christ, in whom they live. John Murray, who wrote the ‘definitive’ essay on Definitive Sanctification (titled, not surprisingly, *Definitive Sanctification*), comments,

Christ was identified with sin when he died, and for that reason alone did he die upon the accursed tree. But, because it was *he* who died, he died to sin – he destroyed its power, executed judgment upon it, and rose triumphant as the Lord of righteousness and life. He established thus for men the realm of life. And since his people were in him when he wrought victory and executed judgment, they also must be conceived of, in some mysterious manner that betokens the marvel of divine conception, wisdom, reckoning, and grace yet really in terms of a divine constitution, as having died to sin also and as having been raised up to newness of life. It is this fact that is basic and central. The mysteriousness of it must not be allowed to impair or tone down the reality of it in God’s reckoning and in the actual constitution established by him in the union of

his people with Christ. It is basic and central because only by virtue of what did happen in the past and finished historical does it come to pass in the sphere of the practical and existential that we actually come into possession of our identification with Christ when *he* died to sin and lived unto God.¹⁶⁰

As we consider sanctification in its progressive, psychological aspects, we must keep in mind the 'ordo salutis' of Romans 8, the 'golden chain of salvation' in which the believer's sanctification is contained within his election, from before the foundation of the world.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed in the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

(Romans 8:29-30)

Sanctification of the regenerate sinner is guaranteed by the sovereign work of God, beginning with timeless election and culminating in glory at the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is why the Apostle calls the gift of the Holy Spirit the 'earnest' or 'down payment' of the salvation to be revealed at the consummation of the age; God has set Himself as security or collateral against the eventual and complete sanctification and glorification of His children. We conclude, then, that sanctification is not so much a cooperative work between the regenerate child of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit, as it is an out-working of the power of God which raised Christ from the dead. Yet we also find, both in Scripture and experience, that another power remains at work within the believer, a power opposed to the principle of holiness inculcated by the indwelling Spirit of God; this power is most frequently called 'the flesh.'

It must be understood that the biblical view of sanctification is not 'optional' to the believer, that the process of sanctification is founded on and flows from the fact of sanctification in Jesus Christ. The indwelling Holy Spirit is meant not merely as a security against damnation and hell, but as the motive force toward a renewal of the *imago Dei* lost in the Fall. Furthermore, this truth lies beneath all mechanical formulae

¹⁶⁰ Murray, John "Definitive Sanctification"; http://www.the-highway.com/definitive-sanctification_Murray.html.

of sanctification produced by the church in an attempt to ‘help’ believers become sanctified. True, the believer is to “*work out your salvation with fear and trembling,*” but he must never lose sight of the immediately following verse, “*for it is God who is at work within you both to will and to work according to His good pleasure.*”¹⁶¹ The principle of holiness instilled within the believer through regeneration is original to the ‘new creation,’ and permanent. Laidlaw writes,

Deeper than consciousness and will, the Spirit produces in regeneration that new abiding state, disposition, principle, or habit, which constitutes the regenerated character, which gives it stability and perseverance, and which makes the renewed man’s walk and conversation to be what they are...To restore the image to its full glory is the end and aim of the whole redemptive process.¹⁶²

But if the principle of sanctification is instilled at the time of regeneration, and if the fact of sanctification is complete in Jesus Christ and secured by the earnest of the Holy Spirit, why is the process of sanctification so difficult and seemingly unfruitful? Confusion over sanctification, and deviations from biblical truth in the form of Purgatory and ‘optional sanctification,’ derive primarily from the experiential reality of imperfect (to put it mildly) sanctification within most believers. If it were not for the fact that Paul’s letters abound with evidence of such a struggle, including in his own life (Romans 7), every believer would despair of his or her regeneration, when measured against the progress of sanctification in the heart. Laidlaw recognizes the process of growth that accompanies the finished work of sanctification through regeneration.

This spiritual principle has been introduced into a moral constitution where sin had its seat. Its progress is largely by conflict. Its growth is a growth in the overcoming of evil as well as the divine life itself.¹⁶³

Delitzsch calls this state of the believer’s soul, torn between the principle of holiness dwelling within the heart through the Holy Spirit and the principle of sin

¹⁶¹ Philippians 2:12-13

¹⁶² Laidlaw; 259-260.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*; 269.

remaining in the flesh, the 'unabolished antinomy.' The term 'antinomy' designates a condition that has the appearance of a contradiction, but upon further examination proves to be logically compatible conflict. It is 'antinomy' when the Apostle John says in one place that "*he who is born of God cannot sin,*" while in another place he states, "*if anyone says that he does not sin, he deceives himself...*" The classic passage, however, for the unabolished antinomy of the Christian walk, is Romans 7:14-25.

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

The controversy surrounding this passage has to do with the state in which Paul lived when these things he says about himself were true. Several options have been proposed: that this description pertains to his *unregenerate* state, that Paul speaks of himself here as *regenerate*, and, finally, that he refers to a *pre-regenerate* state in which he is being awakened by the Gospel. A thorough review of these options belongs to a commentary study on Romans; we are in the process of studying the biblical psychological aspects of sanctification. Therefore, we will dismiss the two least likely options before proceeding to analyze the passage under the rubric of the third.

The first to be dismissed is the *pre-regenerate* option, for no such state of being can be found in the teaching of the New Testament. While the metaphor of 'born again' is applicable to the reality of regeneration, yet we cannot maintain from the biblical record

a 'gestation period' in which a sinner abides in a transitional phase somewhere between unregenerate and regenerate. This *pre-regenerate* view of Paul in Romans 7, however, has many advocates among the Higher Life (Keswick) teaching, for the movement from chapter 7 into chapter 8 seems to validate the concept of a 'second blessing' and a 'victorious Christian life.'

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

(Romans 8:1-11)

Paul's description of a divided inner life – a conflict between laws within the consciousness and will of the believer – resonates far more with honest believers than the view that a Christian can gain complete victory over sin, as pleasant as that possibility does sound. Furthermore, it is not difficult to see that the conflict between the spirit and the flesh continues in chapter 8, where we find the body "*dead because of sin,*" while the spirit is "*alive because of righteousness.*" This condition of conflict does not represent a temporary transition phase from sinner to saint.

The other option to be rejected is that the apostle speaks of himself in his unregenerate state. Paul speaks of a division of principles or laws within himself: there is the "*law of my mind, which delights in the law of God,*" and there is a "*law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind.*" This situation denotes a man divided

in will and intention, in which the central core (the inner man) *delights in the law of God*. Whereas it is possible that an unregenerate Saul of Tarsus might claim to delight in the law of God, as any Pharisee would claim, it would be a statement that the Apostle Paul could not have made about himself prior to his salvation. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Paul became convinced of the *total* depravity of the fallen nature; there is no division within the unbeliever, between the desire to do good and to obey God on the one hand, and an insidious force of evil on the other. Paul's anthropology of fallen man is not equivocal: "*There is none that seek after God...they have all gone astray...there are none righteous, no not one.*"¹⁶⁴ The unregenerate do not struggle internally between 'delighting in the law of God' and 'the law at work in the members' of the body. The dead in spirit do not experience such a conflict; though some sinners may be more sensitive in conscience than others, the most sensitive conscience does not constitute the struggle of wretchedness described here by Paul. Laidlaw concludes,

Such a position of true willingness toward the good, and absolute unwillingness toward the evil, could not be occupied by any but a spiritually quickened soul. It is a state brought about neither by the aspirations of natural virtue, nor by the unsupported appeals of the moral law, but only by the grace of God.¹⁶⁵

Delitzsch adds,

It is therefore a work of grace when a man has attained to the position of having an inward delight in God's law according to his inward man, and according to his own absolute prevailing personal life desires that which is good – that which is conformed to the spiritual law of God; whilst in his outward man, *i.e.*, in his members, and generally in his natural life, the law of sin still prevails.¹⁶⁶

Perhaps most decisive in this brief analysis is the usage by Paul of the present tense throughout chapters 7 and 8. The struggle of which he writes is a *present*, and not a *past*, struggle. The necessity of continuing the fight carries on into chapter 8, and is

¹⁶⁴ Cp. Romans 3:9-18

¹⁶⁵ Laidlaw; 278.

¹⁶⁶ Delitzsch; 417.

picked up again in chapter 12, have the three-chapter excursus on the nation of Israel in the plan of God. The psychological implications of Paul's semi-biographical account (what applies to the apostle applies to every believer; it is not a condition unique to Paul), are quite powerful. Delitzsch notes, "There is no portion of Scripture which affords us a more profound psychological insight into the internal condition of the regenerate than Rom. vii, in association with ch. viii."¹⁶⁷

The solution to the mystery of identity in Romans 7 comes with the understanding of the biblical negative connotation of the term 'flesh' as the soul-body complex inherited through natural generation from one's father. Original sin renders all children born of Adam's race, *ex traduce* from their human father, 'flesh.' This soul-body complex is not eradicated at regeneration; it remains, and with it the principle of sin in which it was conceived and born.

Flesh and bone of the flesh are we all, and so remain until the regeneration is completed in the resurrection; and, because with this inborn nature sin also is inborn in us, we are and remain also inalienably burdened with sin, or, as may also be said, since we cannot release ourselves from it, imprisoned under it.¹⁶⁸

This condition is not one of 'two men in one body,' as some have taught throughout the ages, nor even of 'two natures in one man,' though this latter theory is closer to the truth. There is but one man – the new man – who is "*alive in the spirit due to righteousness.*" Yet the flesh of the former unregenerate condition remains, and the downward tug of the sensual wars against the upward pull of the spiritual. This state of being underlies the apostle's continual admonition to "*walk by the spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.*"¹⁶⁹ The center of operation in biblical sanctification, as it is presented by the Apostle Paul, is the *mind* of the believer. The "*mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace.*"¹⁷⁰ The concrete object of devotion for the mind set on the spirit is the law of God, in which the spirit-led mind delights. But

¹⁶⁷ Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*; 433.

¹⁶⁸ Delitzsch; 437.

¹⁶⁹ Galatians 5:16

¹⁷⁰ Romans 8:6

this law, as we have learned in Romans 7, also serves to illuminate in greater degree the sin which remains in the flesh.

The apostle has now explained, that between his will and his deed subsists a contradiction which gives a testimony to the goodness of the law to which the will is directed, and the opposed constitution of his own nature...he concludes thence, that the spiritual law of God reveals to him in his nature a fleshly law, and thus (which is just the redeeming purpose of that law of God) awakens and sustains in him the longing after deliverance from this nature which has fallen into the power of sin and death.¹⁷¹

Does the tripartite view of human nature account for the phenomenon of Romans 7 & 8? If it is the spirit of man that died when Adam fell, then according to the tripartite perspective, the human soul was left 'enslaved' to the human body - the psychical nature of man yoked to the sensual. Certainly it is biblical to speak of unregenerate man as one controlled by his appetite - "*their god is their belly,*" for instance. We have thus interpreted the negative connotation of 'flesh' as referring to this psychical-sensual complex that is fallen man. According to Paul in I Corinthians 2, the unregenerate man can be no otherwise than 'fleshly' or 'natural.' It is hard to imagine Paul then attributing to this being a 'delight in the law of God,' as we read in Romans 7.

When the sinner is born again, however, he becomes alive in his spirit. It is obvious to experience that no change takes place in the body (and consequently, very little change in the appetites), and no substantive change takes place at regeneration in the soul, either. The regenerate man is still recognizable in both form and personality as the former sinner; the new principle of life within him is often not immediately manifest to others, beside the word of his testimony. Still, we expect change to take place, the change of sanctification that logically and inevitably follows true regeneration. The soul - the mind, the will, the ambitions and emotions - are now drawn to the newly alive spirit, in which also dwells the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who does the drawing, leading the mind into the truth and confirming in the soul that the regenerate one is

¹⁷¹ Delitzsch; 444.

now a child of God. But the flesh does not give up easily, and there is that old downward pull of the fleshly appetites – the momentary pleasures of sin – still present in the members of the regenerate body. The ensuing struggle and conflict characterizes sanctification, both as it is described by the apostle in Romans 7 and as it is experienced by all believers.

In other words, there is, as our every-day experience teaches us, in our life referred to God, a region pervaded by grace, and a region only, so to speak, shone upon (illuminated) by grace. Certainly, in the regenerate person, an all-powerful might of good shows itself effectual; but, opposed to it, there is also a power of evil, which, although overcome, is still constantly needing to be restrained; and in this contest, which ought to be a constant victory, a mournful powerlessness of good purposes remaining unaccomplished throws its long shadows, as we are compelled to avow in daily contrition, on every evening self-examination.¹⁷²

It is apparent from Paul's writings that the essence of sanctification is *walking by the spirit*. He mentions this in Galatians 5 and, of course, in Romans 8. But what does this mean? What does it look like? Pietism and Pentecostalism teach that what is involved here is a 'second blessing,' a 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' that transforms the believer from a 'carnal' Christian into a spiritual one. Perhaps because the concept of spiritualism is necessarily nebulous to our minds – an abstract that produces concrete results – there is an understandable tendency to interpret the process of sanctification, of 'walking in the spirit,' in a 'let go and let God' sort of abandon. In pietistic and charismatic movements within Christianity, 'walking by the spirit' has consisted primarily in a non-academic, non-rational emotionalism that attempts to bypass the mind and target the heart directly. But is this the 'spiritual walk' of which Paul speaks?

Throughout the section in Romans 7 & 8 that we have alluded to, the apostle describes the 'good side' of his inner nature as "*delighting after the law of God*" and as "*joyfully concurring with the law of God in the inner man.*" The notable aspects of such phrases are the involvement of the *mind* and the centrality of God's *law*. It is of considerable importance to our study to note that the contrast that Paul develops in

¹⁷² Delitzsch; 455-456.

Romans 7 & 8 is between the *flesh* on the one hand, and the *mind* on the other. “There is therefore an evident propriety in *nous* (mind) being set over against *sarx* (flesh) in Rom. vii, because the field of the struggle there described is man and his principles of nature under the law of God.”¹⁷³ Contrary to much popular belief, the battleground of sanctification – in which ‘walking by the spirit’ is the chief strategic and tactical plan – occurs in the believer’s mind, rather than in his or her heart.

This reveals another misconception among modern evangelicals with regard to the law of God. Far from being done away with and relegated to a former ‘dispensation,’ the law of God is the spiritual man’s delight. This should come as no surprise to anyone who has read Psalm 1, or Psalm 119.

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners,
Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season
And its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.* (Psalm 1:1-3)

Dispensationalism has impacted modern evangelical thought to such an extent that many believers no longer realize that Psalm 1 *still* describes the blessed man – “*his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night.*” This sounds a lot like the “*law of my mind*” of which Paul speaks in Romans 7. Thus we may conclude, at least provisionally, that a major part of sanctification – as a process – is the meditation and delight of the believer upon God’s law, His Word. The path to sanctification does not bypass the mind and target the heart directly, but rather it reaches and transforms the heart *through* the mind. This conclusion is then verified by the apostle’s own admonition in Romans 12, which logically follows immediately upon Romans 8, though the important parenthetical treatise of Romans 9 – 11 intervenes.

¹⁷³ Laidlaw; 275.

Consider how the passage reads if one were to move directly from Romans 8 into Romans 12. After the 'therefore' of Romans 8:1, in which there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, Paul closes the chapter with the magnificent tribute to the faithfulness of God in love through Jesus Christ. Typical of the apostle at this point would be what modern exegetes call his 'application' section, but instead we enter into the most profound treatment of the plan of God with respect to Israel in all of Scripture, Romans chapters 9, 10, and 11. But Romans 12:1 picks up where Romans 8:39 leaves off, with the 'therefore' of application we would expect from Paul.

But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord...Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Romans 8:37-39; 12:1-2)

Few would argue that the supreme goal of sanctification is the transformation of the believer more and more into the image of Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of this transformation, but defines it as "*the renewing of your mind.*" This is parallel to the believer presenting "*your body a living and holy sacrifice,*" which itself constitutes a significant use of *soma* (body) instead of *sarx* (flesh). The body is still a part of the equation, which is well accounted for in the tripartite view of human nature, only it is to be offered to the Lord in spiritual sacrifice, rather than pandered to as part of the 'flesh.' The conflict between the two laws – the law of God in the mind and the law of sin in the flesh – is not fought by self-denial and aestheticism. Rather the path toward sanctification is one in which the field of the mind is progressively dominated and permeated by the law of God – the transcript of divine holiness – and the soul is thus drawn toward the life of the spirit rather than the death of the flesh.

This 'unabolished antinomy' has been ordained by God as the way to holiness. It is conceivable that God might have simply made the man practically holy at the moment he was born again, though even in our finite understanding we can realize that that which is cheaply gained is cheaply valued. Further study in Romans 8, as well as in I Corinthians 15 and Hebrews 11, reveals that the perfection of all things waits for the final consummation of the age, in which day the Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed in the fullness of His glory, and His redeemed and fully sanctified saints along with Him.