

Part III: Man in Relation to God

Chapter XI: Man in His Original State

From the discussion of the doctrine of God we pass on to that of man, the crown of God's handiwork.

1. The Essential Elements of Human Nature

The usual view is that man consists of two parts, body and soul. This is in harmony with the self-consciousness of man, and is also borne out by a study of Scripture, which speaks of man as consisting of "body and soul," Matt. 6:25; 10:28, or of "body and spirit," Eccl. 12:7; 1 Cor. 5:3,5. Some are of the opinion that the words 'soul' and 'spirit' denote different elements, and that therefore man consists of three parts, body, soul, and spirit, Cf. 1 Thess. 5:23. It is evident, however, that the two words 'soul' and 'spirit' are used interchangeably. Death is sometimes described as a giving up of the soul, Gen. 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21, and sometimes as the giving up of the spirit, Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59. The dead are in some cases named "souls," Rev. 9:6; 20:4, and in others 'spirits,' I Pet 3:19; Heb. 12:23. The two terms denote the spiritual element in man from different points of view. As spirit it is the principle of life and action, which controls the body, and as soul it is the personal subject, which thinks and feels and wills, and in some cases the seat of the affections.

2. The Origin of the Soul in Each Individual

There are three views respecting the origin of the individual souls.

a. Pre-existentialism. Some advocated the idea that the souls of men existed in a previous state, and that something that happened then accounts for their present condition. A few found in this an explanation of the fact that man is born as a sinner. This view finds no favor now.

b. Traducianism. According to this View men derive their souls as well as their bodies from their parents. This is the common view in the Lutheran Church. Support for it is

found in the fact that nothing is said about the creation of Eve's soul, and that descendants are said to be in the loins of their Fathers, Gen. 46:26; Heb. 7:9, 10. Furthermore, it seems to be favored by the fact that in the case of animals both body and soul are passed on from the old to the young, by the inheritance of family traits and peculiarities, and by the inheritance of sinful corruption, which is a matter of the soul more than of the body. However, it is burdened with serious difficulties. It either makes the parents creators, or assumes that the soul of man can be divided into various parts. Moreover, it endangers the sinlessness of Jesus.

c. Creationism. This holds that each soul is a direct creation of God, of which the time cannot be precisely determined. The soul is supposed to be created pure, but to become sinful even before birth by entering into that complex of sin by which humanity as a whole is burdened. This view is common in Reformed circles. It is favored by the fact that Scripture represents the body and the soul of man as having different origins, Eccl. 12:7; Isa. 42:5; Zech. 12:1; Heb. 12:9. Moreover, it is more in harmony with the spiritual nature of the soul, and safeguards the sinlessness of Jesus. It is not free from difficulties, however. It does not explain the inheritance of family traits, and may seem to make God the Creator of sinful souls.

3. Man as the Image of God

The Bible teaches that man is created in the image of God. According to Gen. 1:26, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." The two words 'image' and 'likeness' evidently denote the same thing. The following passages show that they are used interchangeably: Gen. 1:26, 27; 5:1; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Col. 3:10; Jas. 3:9. The word 'likeness' probably stresses the fact that the image is most like or very similar. There are different views of the image of God in man:

a. The Roman Catholic view: Roman Catholics find the image of God in certain natural gifts with which man is endowed, such as the spirituality of the soul, the freedom of the will, and immortality. To these God added a supernatural gift, called original righteousness, to keep the lower nature in check. This is supposed to constitute man's likeness to God.

b. The Lutheran view. The Lutherans are not all agreed on this point, but the prevailing opinion is that the image of God consists only in those spiritual qualities with which man was endowed at creation, namely, true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. These may be designated original righteousness. This view is too restricted.

c. The Reformed view. The Reformed distinguish between the natural and the moral image of God. The former is the broader of the two, and is generally said to consist in man's spiritual, rational, moral, and immortal being. This was obscured but not lost by sin. The latter is the image of God in the more restricted sense, and consists in true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. This was lost by sin and is restored in Christ, Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10. Since man retained the image in the broader sense, he can still be called the image or image-bearer of God, Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; 15:49; Jas 3:9.

4. Man in the Covenant of Works

God at once entered into covenant relationship with man. This original covenant is called the covenant of works.

a. Scripture proof for the covenant of works. (1) Paul draws a parallel between Adam and Christ in Rom. 5:12-21. In Adam all men died, but in Christ all those who are His are made alive. This means that Adam was the representative head of all men, just as Christ is now the representative head of all those who are His. (2) In Hos. 6:7 we read: "But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant" (Am. Rev.). Adam's sin is called a transgression of the covenant.

b. The elements of the covenant of works. (1) The parties. A covenant is always a compact between two parties. In this case they are the triune God, the sovereign Lord of the universe, and Adam as the representative of the human race. Since these parties are very unequal, the covenant naturally partakes of the nature of an arrangement imposed on man. (2) The promise. The promise of the covenant was the promise of life in the highest sense, life raised above the possibility of death. This is what believers now receive through Christ, the last Adam. (3) The condition. The condition was that of absolute obedience. The positive command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was clearly a test of pure obedience. (4) The penalty. The penalty was

death in the most inclusive sense of the word, physical, spiritual, and eternal. This consists not only in the separation of body and soul, but more fundamentally in the separation of the soul from God. (5) The sacrament(s). In all probability the tree of life was the only sacrament of this covenant,— if it was indeed a sacrament. It seems to have been appointed as a symbol and seal of life.

c. The present validity of the covenant of works. Arminians hold that this covenant was wholly set aside. But this is not correct. The demand of perfect obedience still stands for those who do not accept the righteousness of Christ. Lev. 18:5; Gal. 3:12. Though they cannot meet the requirement, the condition stands. It holds no more, however, for those who are in Christ, since He met the demands of the law for them. It ceased to be a way of life, for as such it is powerless after the fall.

To memorize. Passages bearing on:

a. The elements of human nature:

Matt. 10:28. "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell."

Rom. 8:10. "And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness."

b. The creation of the soul:

Eccl. 12:7. "And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God who gave it."

Heb. 12:9. "Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?"

c. Man's creation in the image of God:

Gen. 1:27. "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."

Gen. 9:6. "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man."

d. Man in general even now tie image of God:

Gen. 9:6. Cf. above under c.

Jas. 3:9. "Therewith bless we the Lord and Father; and therewith curse we men, who are made in the likeness of God."

e. The restoration of the image of God in man:

Eph. 4:24. "And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth."

Col. 3:10. "And have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of Him that created him."

f. The covenant of works: Hos. 6:7. "But they like Adam have transgressed the covenant."

1 Cor. 15:22. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."

For Further Study:

a. How would you explain the passages which seem to imply that man consists of three elements, 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12; compare Matt. 22:37?

b. Does man's dominion over the rest of creation also form part of the image of God? Gen. 1:26, 28; Ps. 8:6-8; Heb. 2:5-9.

c. What indications of a covenant can you find in Gen. 2 and 3?

Questions for Review:

1. What is the usual view of the elements of human nature, and how can this be proved?

2. What other view is there, and what passages seem to support it?
3. What different views are there as to the origin of the soul?
4. What are the arguments for, and the objections to each one of these?
5. Do the words 'image' and likeness denote different things?
6. What is the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, and the Reformed view of the image of God in man?
7. What distinction do the Reformed make, and why is it, important?
8. What Bible proof have we for the covenant of works?
9. Who are the parties in the covenants?
10. What is the promise, the condition, the penalty, and the sacrament of the covenants?
11. In what sense does this covenant still hold?
12. In what sense is it abolished?