
DOCTRINE OF HUMANITY

III. HUMANITY'S CONSTITUTION

A. THEORIES ON THE STRUCTURE OF HUMAN NATURE

There are two issues that are involved in the question of humanity's constitution. One is, how are we made up? It is sort of a question of a parts list. What makes up a human being? Are we one thing? Are we two things? Are we three things or more? What makes up a human being? If you answer this question that we are made up of something physical and spiritual, then the next question is, how do we get the spiritual part? Where does that come from? Therefore, the transmission of the soul will be the next thing that we look at.

In terms of the structure of human nature, that is, what makes us up as human beings, there are really three main positions that are held.

1. MONISM

A. *THE VIEW*

Monism is the view that human beings are indivisible body/soul unities. When the Bible talks about human beings it does so referring to parts of us, but those parts are never to be understood, according to this view, as separable from us. It talks about our minds or our heart or our soul or our body or whatever, but none of those instances of referring to parts is meant to indicate that these are separate substances. They are really just aspects of one unified substance; hence the term Monism. We are one thing, not two or three or more substances brought together. We are one substance.

One of the main proponents of this view is H. Wheeler Robinson. Another more recent advocate is Robert Brinsmead. Probably the most famous person is G. C. Berkouwer, who argued for Monism in his book "Man, the Image of God".

B. *SUPPORT*

The Bible describes us as whole human beings that are affected by physical influences as well emotional, spiritual, and intellectual; that is, things that affect our emotions can affect us physically. Doesn't that indicate that there is this integration and oneness of who we are? If you are depressed, you might not eat the way you should. Intellectual things can affect your spiritual reality. How many people have had doubts about things intellectually, and their spiritual life is hampered by that? There is this integration indicating that we are all connected together; a body-soul unity. We are all connected together, and we ought not see parts of us as separable ontological units, according to this view; they are not separable from one another but rather always functioning together. We are not human unless everything is together.

C. *RESPONSE*

I think that it is absolutely right that there is this integration that takes place in who we are. Clearly God made us in such a way that our minds, emotions, bodies and wills are interconnected. That seems to be experientially so very true of us. But does that observation entail that we are all one thing, we are a Monist unity? Couldn't the same thing be true with a different ontology; namely, we are made up different substances which together work in an integrated away? In other words, I don't think that you have to hold to Monism to account for integration. Monism is not necessary to account for a unified sense of our interconnectedness as human beings. The question is, is there biblical evidence that Monists may not appeal to; biblical evidence for understanding who we are as

inseparable substances? At this point my response is, let's look further. It makes sense, but are there biblical reasons for thinking that there are in fact separable substances that make up the human nature? If so, then you must return to this question, how does the integration take place?

2. DICHOTOMY

A. *THE VIEW*

This view holds that we are made up two substances. We are a dichotomous reality; two substances brought together which are physical and nonphysical, material and not material substances, normally referred to as body and soul. Although you wouldn't have to use the word soul, that is the most common term used in terms of the nonmaterial aspect of us. We are physical beings, and we are immaterial, spiritual beings. Those two things come together to form who we are as human beings. But nonetheless, they are separable realities. In saying that, the Dichotomist is not saying that they are best separated, or they ought to be separated, or that we are fully functioning human beings as God created us to be when they are separated. The Dichotomist is claiming that they are in principle separable; you can divide up these two realities of material and spiritual or body and soul. The first person to argue a Dichotomist view in church history was Tertellian. Tertellian gave a defense of this view in his "A Treatise on the Soul", in which he argued for the separation of the soul from the body. It has been a dominant view through the history of the church; there is probably more representation in the Dichotomy view theologically than the Trichotomy view. More have held to a Dichotomist view.

B. *SUPPORT*

In terms of differing with Monism in particular, the Dichotomist would want to point to passages which seem to indicate a clear separation of soul from body at the point of physical death. If true, this presents the Monist view with tremendous problems. How can this be? Are we really human? Maybe not in the full sense, but do we not continue to exist after death, and yet our bodies are in the grave? Look at Luke 23:43, Jesus' statement to the thief on the cross.

Lk 23:43 And he said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise."

Later that day the body of the thief on the cross was in the grave. What about Jesus saying today you shall be with me? We know Jesus' body was in a grave until resurrection morning. So how can this be unless the "you" and the "me" indicate the identities of the individuals who exist after they have separated from their bodies. It seems to indicate that that is the case.

Matt 10:28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

2 Cor 5:8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

This is a great comfort to those who lose loved ones who are believers to think they are absent from the body just like that, but grandpa, or mom is with the Lord. That is a wonderful comfort.

In Philippians 1:21-24 Paul expresses his desire to be Christ but to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for the sake of others.

Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Phil 1:22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. Phil 1:23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; Phil 1:24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

To depart and be with Christ means to die physically. To remain in the flesh is not to be with Christ. So Paul anticipates that at the instant he dies, he is separated from his body and goes to be with the Lord.

The second argument is more of an argument in response to the Trichotomist view that says there are three parts of who we are: body, soul, and spirit. The Dichotomist wants to give some arguments here that indicate that soul and spirit are used interchangeably quite often in Scripture.

Jn 12:27 Now my soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, "Father, save me from this hour"? But for this purpose, I came to this hour.

Jn 13:21 When Jesus had said this, he became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray me."

In the first one Jesus says, "Now my soul has become troubled" and in the second one it says of him, "He became troubled in spirit." What are we to make of that? The Dichotomist will argue there really isn't a distinction that you can maintain between "pneuma" (spirit) and "psuche" (soul). They are used in functionally the same way.

Is 26:9 At night my soul longs for you, indeed, my spirit within me seeks you diligently; for when the earth experiences your judgments the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

Here is this parallelism again. My soul longs for you; my spirit within me seeks you diligently.

Lk 1:46 And Mary said, "My soul exalts the Lord, Lk 1:47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

These are synonymous parallelism type indicators that it is hard to distinguish soul and spirit in either Old Testament or New Testament references.

The third and last argument that Dichotomists would give is that there are occasions when Scripture refers to all of who we are and spirit is not mentioned. That will become significant when we think about the Trichotomist view. The word for spirit is "pneuma" in Greek and "ruach" in Hebrew.

Gen 2:7 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.

There is no mention here of spirit. He is fully human when he has a body from the dust of the ground formed and breathed in soul. That does it; there is not a third component that is needed, namely, a spirit.

Matt 10:28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

To kill the body is not necessarily to kill the soul, and yet body and soul together are used as a summary phrase for all of who we are.

Matt 22:37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."

This is an interesting passage because in all of the Synoptics you don't find spirit in any of the renderings of them. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind and strength (if you have all four present). Where is spirit? I take it that Jesus, or the person who says this to Jesus, mean love the Lord you God with all of who you are, every aspect of your nature. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. The notable absence there in light of the Trichotomist view, is no mention of spirit.

C. RESPONSE

My own thought is that I find this a very compelling view. I think that are problems with the Trichotomist view. The Monist view, in my judgment, altogether fails at the question of the death of a human being according to those passages we looked at. You can't have a Monist view if you take seriously that at death we are absent from the body but present with the Lord. How can this work with a Monist view? The only thing that you could say is that there is some kind of spiritual resurrection that takes place; and some have held this, that absent from the body present with Lord means that you are spiritually raised at that point. The problem with that is that it conflicts with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body which takes place at the coming of Christ. So that is not going to work. I think that the Dichotomist view clearly is on track in arguing for at least these two. Then the question becomes, should we add a third one: spirit?

3. TRICHOTOMY

A. THE VIEW

We are made up of three parts: body, soul and spirit. The prevailing view of this notion through the history of the church has been that all human beings are made with body, soul and spirit together, but spirit is not oriented toward God until regeneration takes place. This view makes a whole more sense when you look at the spiritualism that is present in so much of the world that isn't Christian. This view would hold that there is this spiritual capacity in every person, but it is not oriented toward God.

There is another view that has been advocated more recently that there is no spirit until you become a Christian. You have a body and a soul, and the spirit is added at that particular point. For most of church history those that advocated a Trichotomist view held that all three are present.

What is the difference between the three? The body is our physical aspect. The soul is the aspects of human nature that we have in common with the animal kingdom. Even things like reasoning are not distinctive to humanity. We know this even better now than would have been the case hundreds of years ago. With emotions, at least dogs have emotions; I don't know if cats do or not. Certainly, there are appetites, longings, drives, aspirations; all of that is part of the soul according to this view. It is emotions, feelings, thoughts, drives, instincts, appetites; those kinds of things. What is spirit? Spirit, according to this view, is the center of our connection with spiritual reality. You will never come home at the end of the day and find your dog or your cat or your chimpanzee or your dolphin worshipping. It is not going to happen. They won't be kneeling in front of an altar, praying; but you

might find your son or daughter doing that; you find people doing that. It is this connectedness with, awareness of, and reaching out toward a spiritual reality, a transcendence reality that marks the spirit according to this view.

B. SUPPORT

The first observation that a Trichotomist would want to make is that it is interesting that both Old and New Testaments have their respective words for soul and spirit. In the Old Testament the word "nephesh" is used in and in the New Testament the word "psuche" is used for soul. For spirit, in the Old Testament "ruach" is used and in the New Testament pneuma. You have in both Testaments distinctive terminology, and it raises the question, is terminology indicative of ontology? Is it referring to separate things? If you analyze that, it is not a very strong argument, because how many terms are there for different parts? There are ears, noses and eyes, how many words are we going to make up because we have parts for them. It doesn't get us anywhere.

The second argument does certainly favor their position understood as they do. There are a couple of passages in particular and two main ones they argue are like full fledge proof for a Trichotomist view.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:23 Paul is indicating that he is longing for God to do this sanctifying work in these people.

1 Thess 5:23 Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you *completely*, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They say here is clear text indicating that this is who we are: spirit, soul, and body preserved complete. May he sanctify you entirely. This comes the closest, they argue, to anything like a parts list of a human being, an indicator of our ontology, what we are, those three things.

The second passage, not quite as forceful, though nonetheless important, is Hebrews 4:12.

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit,

Can they be divided? Yes, there it: the division of soul and spirit, indicating that these are separate things.

The also refer to 1 Corinthians 2:14,15 and 1 Corinthians 15:44 where Paul uses "psychikos" and "pneumatikos" indicating the "soulish" person and the spirit person. They say that indicates that soul and spirit are distinct.

1 Cor 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Cor 2:15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

1 Cor 15:44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

C. RESPONSE

1 Thessalonians 5:23, on the surface, this does look like a very strong case for the Trichotomist view. I can see why people are persuaded by it. However, the main thing that leads me to question this is that I don't think this passage is different in kind than the "Love your Lord your God" passage (Matt 22:37 or any of the Synoptic

accounts of that). Love the Lord your God with all of who you are; clearly that is the implication. Can you imagine if, in fact, spirit is what the Trichotomist says it is? Think of that passage. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength," and leave out spirit. What an omission.

What about Hebrews 4:12? This is an easier one in my judgment to show the problem with the Trichotomist argument because if you read the whole verse you realize that there is a problem here.

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Would you want to say joints and marrow are separable substances? Or isn't the point the opposite of what the Trichotomist is saying? The Trichotomist is say that indicates the division of two separable things. Isn't the point rather that the word of God is so powerful that it can enter into what is one thing, joints and marrow, and bring a division into what is one? Isn't that the point? That would argue then for the division of soul and spirit not being ontologically separate, but that the Word of God can enter into what is one thing and divide it or can open it in a way to expose what is there? That seems to fit better with what he is saying.

A comment in regard to this view. The Trichotomist view has implications for spirituality that are troubling. It is troubling because if spirit is really what relates us most directly to the Lord, and spirit is not soul, what is soul? Mind, emotions, will, affections, longings, drives, aspirations is all in your soul, but what is it really? Number one, it is very ethereal. This view promotes a mystical view of spirituality, a kind of connectedness with God that is really not connected with the way we think or the way we feel. We escape the reality we are in. We enter the unknown. You try not to think, you try not to feel, and it ends up being this sort of odd spirituality that fits the culture we live in. It is much more like Buddhist, Zen meditation than Christian meditation.

What if spirit and soul are in fact the same thing? We are bodily and spiritual beings, then we realize spiritual growth has everything to do with how we think, how we feel, what we choose, what we value. Those things become central to spiritual growth, not something that is sort of peripheral to the whole question. So spiritual growth becomes a matter of how do we retrain our minds, as it talks about in Romans 12:1,2. How do we develop affections so that we love the Lord our God with our hearts, soul, mind and strength? How do we develop wills that will choose to follow the will of God as Christ did? It seems to me that this is a much more concrete sense of what spirituality is. *Meditation is not escaping rational thought about God. Biblical meditation is zeroing in on rational thoughts of God as he has revealed himself in his word;* it is thinking hard about who God is and his attributes and Scriptural truths that reshape the way we think. I do think that this has some implication in terms of how we understand what life is as a Christian and how to grow in Christ.

B. TRANSMISSION OF THE SOUL

There are two main views. If you hold either a Dichotomist or Trichotomist view, either one of them, then you have the question of, how it we become beings that are "ensouled"? Where we have the immaterial part, how does that happen?

1. CREATIONISM

A. *THE VIEW*

This is the view widely held in Roman Catholic and Reformed circles that God creates a human soul and joins it to the human body at some time between conception and physical birth. President Bill Clinton held this view and used it for justification of his pro-choice position on abortion. His argument was until a baby is born, it is not a person. They take Genesis 2:7 as the indicator of full life; God breathed into Adam and he became a living soul. When a baby takes its first breath on its own, that is when "ensoulment" takes place, according to some who hold this view. Until birth, even partial birth, if the baby hasn't breathed yet, then it isn't a human being; it isn't a person according to some who hold this view. There are advocates of this view, of creationism, who say, we don't know when "ensoulment" takes place, so we dare not abort the fetus because it may be a human person; we may be killing a human person. This is the Roman Catholic view. Maybe "ensoulment" takes place at conception.

Let me chart this out for you. God creates Adam and Eve and through biological reproduction bodies are formed. The woman conceives and a fetus, a human body is formed, but God provides the soul in each case to that particular individual. People who hold this view, the Creationist view of the soul, tend to hold also a federal view on how we become sinners. The sin of Adam is charged against us, and so God creates a good soul and then imputes the sin of Adam to that soul. We are ensouled with the sinful soul of Adam. The Creationist view of the transmission of the soul is usually linked with, especially in reformed theology, the federal headship view of original sin, of how we become sinners.

B. SUPPORT

Genesis 2:7 is seen as a paradigm. That God created the body from the dust of the ground, so he is done with the body. Then he breaths into it the breath of life. Adam is the paradigm.

They argue that it accords best with Christ's humanity. This way Christ can be born of Mary and have a fully human body, but the soul be given to him by God who is sinless. For every other person who is in Adam, the sin of Adam is imputed to that person, every one of us, every single human being, except one: Christ because he is the second Adam. He is not in the line of Adam, for he receives a good pure soul. It is not imputed with sin. The body comes through the line of Adam and Eve and the soul is created by God. They argue that that helps.

The other argument is that it fits best with the federal headship view. If you are inclined toward a federal headship view of sin, then you will likely be inclined toward this Creationist view as well because the two cohere quite well.

2. TRADUCIANISM

A. *THE VIEW*

Where does this term Traducian come from? Traducianism comes from the Latin word "traduco" which means to carry over or bring across or transfer. It has been held mostly in Lutheran and Baptist traditions although some Reformed theologians hold it. According to this view, God creates Adam and then Eve and gives to them the responsibility to procreate who they are as they are as human beings; namely body and soul are passed on, (traduco) transferred over through the human reproductive system. When parents conceive a child, they conceive a human being not just a human body. There is procreation that takes place in this view. There is a sense in which in the Creationism view and the Traducianism view, the soul and the body are, in both cases, from God. In the

Creationist view the soul is created by God directly or immediately without any mediation whereas in this view the soul is created by God immediately through the mediation of the parents bringing about a body-soul person.

B. SUPPORT

You could look at Genesis 1:26-28. You could also look at Genesis 5:3 where the human pair is told to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The implication is just like cows and horses and fishes. What do they reproduce? Cows and horses and fish. And humans reproduce humans; they really do procreate. They are involved in the task that God had given them of filling the earth with humans. Genesis 5:3 I think is significant on this point; it is a very strong text indicating this view.

Gen 5:3 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.

That is the exact language of Genesis 1:26.

Gen 1:26a Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness;

In Genesis 5:23 Seth is made in the likeness of Adam. Is he the image of God? Yes, go to chapter 9; you can't kill because you are killing someone who is made in the image of God. How did Seth get in the image of God? By being made in the image of Adam who is in the image of God. How are you in the image of God? By being in the image of your parents who are in the image of their parents, who are in the image of their parents, who are ultimately in the image of Adam. There is this procreation that takes place. Seth is in the image and likeness of his father.

The second argument is that the Bible speaks in some cases of descendants as being in the loins of their ancestors. For example, Genesis 46:26 and Hebrew 7:9,10.

Gen 46:26 All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all,

Heb 7:9-10 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.

That seems to indicate that there is a tie between Levi and Abraham that indicates that he really does come from Abraham. It seems to indicate this line of transferring humanity on through.

What about the argument about Christ in the other position? Can this view account for Christ's sinlessness? Yes, it can, simply by arguing in one of two ways. When we come to Christ one argument is that the sin that had been imputed and passed on to all the subsequent generations just simply by miraculous interception is not allowed to in relation to Christ. Another argument, invokes the notion of male headship. Notice, it is the sins of the fathers visited upon the third and fourth generation. Notice, when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, Eve sinned first and Adam is held accountable for it. And notice the virgin birth of Christ. This accomplishes, in my judgment, at least two things. One, he was fully God and fully man. The Holy Spirit took the place of a human father and brought about this conception so that the one born would be called the Son of God (Lk 1:35). The second thing was, it prevented the sinful line of Adam from being passed on from the father. Every other human being born, you and I included, had a dad; at least at the point of conception there was a human father involved and sin is passed on. Not with Christ; there was no human father.

The other point I will make is not a biblical argument; it is simply experiential or psychological. If you look at these two views and ask the question, which view argues better for what we think of a family resemblance that there is among children and parents; which is more than physical? Yes a daughter can have her daddy's eyes, but a son can have his mother's or father's disposition. If our souls are individually created by God it breaks the link, it seems, of what passes on immaterially from parents to children. This is even shown when adoptions take place; the children are taken from their natural parents immediately and studies have shown how many similarities there are to the natural parents. Twins are separated and they find that there are these vast similarities.

In my view, this view also accounts better for the kind of commonality in family lines that is more than physical. It is spiritual, emotional, dispositional, personality and all kinds of things, it seems to be passed on.

One another thing about this view, if it is true, really does raise your conception of conception. It raises the estimate of what it is when a mother and father procreate, making in the image of God. It is one of the reasons why it should not be treated lightly; there should not be sexual relations among people who are not married or outside of marriage in adultery? We should stand back and be awe struck at the privilege that God has given to a mother and a father to be as he is, Creator of the image of God in humanity.