

ADVANCED BIBLICAL COURSE



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Doctrine of Man

INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is the study of man – the human being. In a theological sense it relates to the study of the whole man as he stands in relation to God. Man cannot be known by any scientific analysis. The human being can only truly be known in terms of his relationship to God – his Creator. He cannot know himself apart from divine revelation. Man’s existence has never been in isolation but always a relational one. His value has been conferred upon him by a Supreme Being, and he is fulfilled only when serving and loving that Being.

The Bible never speaks of man in himself, as isolated, but always in terms of his relationship to God for example: -

- ◆ He is a creature made by God. (Genesis 2:27)
- ◆ He has fallen “from” God. (Genesis 3 & Romans 5:12ff)

I ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF MAN

- ◆ Man is a God.
Humanism involves a concentration on man which does not take God into account. Man is put onto centre-stage and is glorified. Humanism attempts to see man as essentially good and minimises the fact of sin.
- ◆ Man is a machine.
To many, man is viewed in terms of what he is able to do. The employer is often interested in the strength, energy, the skills and capabilities of an individual. The individual is important only so far as what he is able to produce. If a machine or computerised robot is able to do a more accurate and efficient job, then the individual is replaced.
- ◆ Man is an animal.
Some see man primarily as a member of the animal kingdom; he has derived or evolved from some higher form(s).

II THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF MAN

Scripture does not say very much about the creation of heaven and earth, the sun and the moon and stars, of plants and animals. These are reported in brief words. But when dealing with the creation of man specific detail seems to be important. (Genesis 1:26-28)

◆ A created being.

Man is said to be a creature who is created by God after careful thought and deliberation on the part of the Godhead. As a result of an executive decision man was brought into existence. (Genesis 1:26)

Thus man did not originate through a chance process of evolution, but by a purposeful, conscious and deliberate act of God. This means that there is a reason for man's existence. He was created for a purpose and that purpose lies in the heart and intention of the Creator. This does not imply, however, that everything else came into existence by chance. Nothing came into existence by chance but the careful planning and decision of God is far more clearly manifest in the making of man than in the creation of the other creatures. Man is something unique.

◆ Created in the image of God.

The Bible says that man is made in the image of God. This indicates that he stands in an entirely different relationship to God, from that of other creatures. Unlike other creatures the human being alone is capable of having a conscious personal relationship with the Creator. Man alone is able to know love, worship and obey his Creator.

◆ An eternal being.

Man, created by an eternal God has an eternal future although he had a finite beginning in time. The human being is not merely a machine nor an animal, but a very special creation. The Creator gives man a real sense of identity and importance. The Bible indicates that every person is valuable and precious to God. Everyone is known to God. (Matthew 10:28-31; Luke 15:3-7 & Psalms 84:4-6)

III MAN IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The Bible states that man is created in the image and likeness of God. (Genesis 1:26-27, 5:1 & 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9 & Acts 17:28)

In Genesis the terms 'tselem' (image) and 'demuth' (likeness) are used. Both words are used in Genesis 1:26; 'tselem' is used in Genesis 1:27, 5:3 and 9:6. In Genesis 5:1 and 5:3, 'demuth' is used.

Paul uses the word 'eikon' in 1 Corinthians 11:7 (image) and James uses the term 'homoiosis' (likeness) in James 3:9.

Some have drawn a clear distinction between the two words, 'image' and 'likeness;' this however does not seem to be justified by their usage in Genesis where they are used interchangeably.

IV THE CONSTITUTIONAL NATURE OF MAN

In this section consideration will be given to the makeup of man – what man is. It will be endeavoured to establish what the essential nature of man is. Is he a unitary whole, or is he made up of two or more different components? If he is made up of different components, what are they?

Various words are used in Scripture to describe man in his relationship to God and to his environment, and in the structure or nature of his own being:-

Spirit – ruach (Hebrew); pneuma (Greek)

Soul – nephesh (Hebrew); psuche (Greek)

Body – soma (Greek)

Flesh – basar (Hebrew); sarx (Greek)

Generally it is agreed that man is basically both a material and immaterial being. It is obvious that the body is the material part of man. Soul, spirit, heart, mind, will and conscience are all facets of man's immaterial nature. It is very difficult to make hard and fast distinctions between these.

◆ Basic views on the nature of man.

- Trichotomy

Believers in 'trichotomism' hold that man in his essential nature is composed of three distinct elements or parts i.e. body, soul and spirit.

- The body is the physical nature of man – something he has in common with animals and plants. The body is the material part of our constitution.
- The soul is the psychological element of man. It is the basic of reason, of emotion and of social interrelatedness.

- The spirit is that element of man which enables him to perceive spiritual matters and respond to spiritual stimuli.

The major foundation of this ‘tripartite’ view of human nature is seen in certain passages in Scripture although Greek philosophy has contributed to its origins. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 are the two particular texts used to support this view. But what about scriptures like Luke 10:27.

- Dichotomy

Believers in dichotomy hold that man in his essential nature is composed of two parts of element: body and soul. The body is the material part and the soul (or spirit) is the immaterial part of man. The terms ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ often seem to be used interchangeably (Luke 1:46-47) and therefore no clear distinction is made between them.

Furthermore, in Matthew 6:25 and 10:28 man is said to be made up of body and soul (psyche) whereas in Ecclesiastes 12:7 and 1 Corinthians 5:3, 5; body and spirit (ruach, pneuma).

In Genesis 35:18, 1 Kings 17:21 and Acts 15:26, death is described as giving up the soul whereas Psalm 31:5 and Luke 23:46 describes death as the giving of the spirit.

There are references to being troubled in spirit (Genesis 41:8 & John 13:21) and to being troubled in soul. (Psalms 42:6 & John 12:27)

- Monism

Believers in this view insist that man is a radical unity. In their understanding, the Bible does not view man as composed of different parts or entities. The terms “body,” “soul” and “spirit” are to be taken as basically synonymous. Man is viewed as a self. – Erickson, page 524. It is said that “body” and “soul” are not contrasting terms, but interchangeable synonyms.

- Unity

Believers in unity hold that the Bible emphasises the fundamental wholeness or unity of man’s nature and that all attempts to divide man into certain essential elements have no Scriptural warrant.

In considering the question of man’s essential make-up (nature) the issue is not whether terms such as soul and spirit may be used but whether the Bible teaches that man is

composed of two or more distinct substance or parts. This is not a question of whether or not dual, triple or multiple aspects of man's nature may be conceived. Obviously, the Bible, in using terms such as "body," "soul," "spirit," "mind," "heart," etc., indicates that various aspects of man's nature may be separately conceived.

It is a vastly different matter, however, when the simple duality of body and soul is taken to indicate a scientific substantial dichotomy of nature which suggests an essential dualism in man. It is quite legitimate to use terms such as "body," "soul" or "spirit" to describe different aspects of man's nature.

The evangelists (Matthew 22:37 & Mark 12:30) did not wish to indicate significant distinctions between elements in man but rather that Christ commanded people to love God with the whole being.

Genesis 2:7 simply states that man was formed from the dust of the ground and that he became a living being ("soul" – nephesh) when God breathed into him. It says quite clearly that he became a living soul – that man is a soul; not, man has a soul.

The essence of man's nature is that his being a living soul is wholly dependent on the life-giving breath of God. He is fundamentally a creature of God who can have no existence apart from the breath of God.

Scripture places much emphasis on the whole man. Man is to be treated as a unity. His spiritual condition cannot be dealt with independent of his physical and psychological condition and vice versa. Man, as a whole being, is the object of God's love, not only his soul, or spirit. It is the whole man who is restored, saved and called into the service of God. (Romans 5:7-10 & 12:1-2 & 1 Corinthians 6:8-20).

The body is not, as in Greek philosophy, regarded as the prison-house of the soul. Salvation is not escape from the physical into the spiritual. Man's ultimate hope is the resurrection of the body. (1 Corinthians 15:12-20)

V THE FALL OF MAN – SIN

Man has never been able to find answers to the question of why sin was included in the plan of God. The Bible does not give us any clues either but the means by which sin entered the world is carefully and clearly detailed in the Word of God in Genesis 3. Although many critics do not consider this to have actually happened, the Scriptures do add weight to its being historically true. (Matthew 19:3-6; Romans 5:12-21; Luke 3:38 & Jude 14)

T.C Hammond points out that there are certain underlying principles in Scripture which are abundantly clear in spite of the fact that no final answer can be given to the question, “Why did not God’s foreknowledge lead Him to anticipate and to prevent sin both in the first man and also at its first entry into the universe?” What is clear on the authority of revelation is: -

- ◆ “God is not the author of sin.
- ◆ God has no need of sin in order to enhance His glory, and He did not permit it solely in order to demonstrate His moral grandeur.
- ◆ The subsequent responsibility of mankind in relation to sin is in no way diminished nor excused on the ground that the men now living were not guilty of its inception.
- ◆ God is not to be regarded as a ‘party’ to the repeated acts of sin – e.g., those of sex – which man has all too successfully perpetuated nor is He to be held as partly responsible for the perpetuation of vice simply because He has not withdrawn His sustaining power from the universe. If man freely chooses to misuse certain of his wonderful endowments and to prostitute his remarkable abilities to base ends, it is scarcely just to blame God.” – “In Understanding Be Men,” page 75.

- ◆ The origin of sin.

The origin of human sin, according to the Bible, is very simply ascribed to the willful self-corruption of the creature under temptation. This is seen in the account given in Genesis 3 and Romans 5:12-21. Man was created a holy being – fellowship with God. God placed man in an environment that was “*all very good*”; but man was tempted to sin by a personal being of another kind. This being had already sinned against God; pointing to the fact that sin was present in the world before the fall of Adam and Eve. But in this study, we are concerned with the origin of sin in the human race.

The process of sin entering the human family is described in Genesis 3. Romans 5:12ff shows that Adam’s sin has been imputed to all mankind.

From the Word of God it is seen that: -

- Sin is not caused by God. (James 1:13)
 - Sin is the choice of the person himself. Man has certain desires which, at root, are legitimate; the desire for food (hunger), the desire for sex, the desire to obtain things, etc. There are proper ways to satisfy each of these desires, and there are also divinely imposed limits (e.g. Luke 4:1ff).
 - Sin originated in an act of free will in which the creature deliberately, responsibly and with adequate understanding of the issues chose to corrupt the holy character of godliness with which God had endowed His creation.
 - Man is held responsible for his sin. (James 1:13-15)
- ◆ The results of sin.
The sin of Adam and Eve was not an isolated event. The consequences were immediately apparent and have far-reaching effects. Sin affects man in several dimensions.
- ◆ Sin affects man's relationship with God.
- Man becomes an enemy of God: -
By rebelling against God, it is man, not God, who breaks the relationship. Man becomes an enemy of God. (Romans 8:7; Colossians 1:21 & James 4:4). In the case of Adam and Eve, trust, love, confidence and intimacy were replaced by fear alienation and avoidance of God. (Genesis 3:7-10) Instead of 'running' to the Lord with positive anticipation to their fellowship with God, they ran away and hid themselves in fear. (Similar situation with officers of the Law, or guilty child hiding from his parents). Shame and fear were now the dominant emotions (Genesis 2:25 & 3:7, 10), indicating the disruption that had taken place.
 - Man becomes the object of God's wrath: -
God is angered by sin and because God is righteous He cannot be complacent towards sin. Sin elicits God's wrath and displeasure. (John 3:36 & Romans 1:18, 2:5 & 9:2)

“From the foregoing it is evident that God looks with disfavour upon sin, indeed, that sin occasions anger or wrath or displeasure within him. Two additional comments should be made, however. The first is that anger is not something that God chooses to feel. His disapproval of sin is not an arbitrary matter, for His very nature is one of holiness; it automatically rejects sin. He is, as we have suggested in another place, ‘allergic to sin’ as it were. The second comment is that we must avoid thinking of God's anger as being excessively emotional. It is not as if he is seething with anger, his temper virtually surging out of control. He is capable of exercising patience and long-suffering and does so. Nor is

God to be thought of as somehow frustrated by our sin. Disappointment is perhaps a more accurate way of characterising his reaction.” – Erickson, page 607.

- Man is destined to die: -

Death is one of the most obvious results of sin. (Genesis 2:17 & 3:19 & Romans 6:23)

This death is primarily spiritual but physical death is included. Spiritual death is the separation of the person from God, in the entirety of his nature.

◆ Sin affects man himself.

As a result of sin man becomes a slave. He is in bondage to Satan and to further acts of sin. For example, Cain felt constrained to lie to God after he had murdered this brother Abel.

Man is blinded and becomes insensitive to God and one's own conscience denying the reality of sin – justifying one's actions.

◆ The extent of sin.

Everyone without exception is a sinner (Kings 8:46; Psalms 130:3 & 143:2 & Romans 3:9-12 & 23). Every individual who has been naturally born is a sinner. Jesus alone is the exception – He was supernaturally born.

“It must be emphasised that not only is every individual involved, but every part of that individual's nature. Together with human characteristics there is transmitted to each new individual a sinful bias, involving liability to endure the consequences of human sin, and the evil principle ('the law of sin') which will uncompromisingly work in antagonism to the requirements of the divine law” – T.C. Hammond, page 83.

◆ God's answer to sin.

The answer to man's predicament is dealt with in a separate study – 'Soteriology.'

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