

## Man - a trinity (spirit, soul, body)

The Christian doctrine of immortality cannot be understood apart from the right conception of the tripartite nature of Man. Many think that Man is a physical being only. There is a great danger of any human being thinking this way. In the desire to satisfy the needs of the body, there is the tendency on Man's part to lose sight of the fact that he is immortal. There have been persons who have lived all of their lives either in ignorance or willful neglect of a life after death, but upon their death-bed they suddenly realized that they were more than physical beings. There is an idea also that prevails largely today that Man consists of only two component parts, namely body and spirit. While soul and spirit are closely related, the Bible does make a distinction between the two.

Man is a triune being because he is created in the image of God. "God said, Let us make man in Our image." (Genesis 1:26) We know that God is a Trinity. The Holy Trinity is clearly set forth in the Apostle Paul's benediction that closed his Second Corinthian Epistle: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." (2 Corinthians 13:14) Our Lord Himself said, in what we call "The Great Commission": "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (Matthew 28:19) Created in the image of God, Man is likewise a trinity. He has a spiritual nature that is separate and distinct from the body in which it dwells.

The two following passages from the Bible clearly establish the fact that Man is a triune being composed of spirit, soul, and body: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23) "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow (body), and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12) The trinity of Man is an essential part of the image relationship between him and God. Life is not ultimately physical, and the body is not the whole Man.

### The spirit

The word "spirit", when used in the Scriptures, has several meanings. Whenever the word "Spirit" appears used with a capital letter, it has but one meaning. It is the name of the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit of God. The word "spirit" spelled with a small letter may have one of several different meanings. It can have direct reference to the spirit of Man which is as much a part of the tripartite nature of Man as the Spirit of the living God is a Person of the Holy Trinity. Or it can indicate an evil spirit such as any agent of Satan.

The threefold nature of Man can be illustrated using three circles. The outer circle stands for the body, the middle circle for the soul, and the inner circle for the spirit. In the outer circle, the body is shown as touching the material / natural world through a person's five senses of sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch. The soul consists of a person's mind (imagination, conscience, memory, reason), emotions and free will. The spirit receives impressions of material / natural

things through the soul, and the spiritual faculties of the spirit are faith, hope, reverence, prayer and worship.

In an unfallen state the spirit of Man was illuminated from Heaven, but when the entire human race fell in Adam, sin closed the window of the spirit, pulled down the curtain, and the chamber of the spirit became a death chamber, and remains so in every unregenerate heart, until the life and light giving power of the Holy Spirit floods that chamber with the life and light giving power of the new life in Christ Jesus.

The spirit of man, being the sphere of God-consciousness, is the innermost sphere of Man where the work of regeneration takes place. The human spirit requires "the spark of regeneration" before there is an understanding of the things of God - "The natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14) Our Lord warned His disciples, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine." (Matthew 7:6) The spirit of unregenerate Man has no more capacity to appreciate the things of God than a dog has to appreciate holy things, or a pig a genuine pearl necklace - "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter 2:22) Man's spiritual nature must be renewed before there is a true conception of Godliness. "God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24) Only one thing stands as a guard at the door of Man's spirit, and that is a person's own free will. When the will is surrendered, the Holy Spirit takes up His abode in the spirit of Man. When that transaction takes place we will know it, for, says Paul: "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God." (Romans 8:16)

### The soul

Man not only has a living soul, but he is a living soul. The Bible says: "And the Lord God formed Man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and Man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) It is vital to remember that Satan does not care if Man goes to churches where the Spirit of God is not in evidence. He knows that Man is a creature of emotions, and it matters not if the emotions are stirred to sentimentalism or even to tears, just so long as Man's spirit does not come in contact with God's Holy Spirit. The soul is the seat of a person's emotions, such as love, hate, lust and every appetite of the body - "Abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul." (1 Peter 2:11)

The soul of Man, his affections and desires, are never directed Godward until after the spirit has become regenerated. Man can never love God, nor the things of God, until he is born again from above. He may have a troubled conscience or be so stirred emotionally that he may weep bitterly, yet still not become born again, instead remaining dead in trespasses and sins. Man's desires and affections are turned toward God when he realizes his sinful condition and God's grace in salvation. When the Spirit of God illuminates the spirit of a person with divine light and life, that person begins to yield his affections and faculties to God.

The Virgin Mary said; "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." (Luke 1:46, 47) She could not extol the Lord in her soul until she had recognized God in her spirit as her Saviour. The initial spiritual shift is in a person's spirit, when Jesus Christ is acknowledged through faith as that person's personal Saviour. It then progresses to permeate that person's soul. David said: "He restoreth my soul." (Psalm 23:3) The Hebrew word translated "restoreth" quite literally means "turneth back". At no time had David lost his salvation, but there were times when his affections and desires were turned from the Lord, as in the case of his sin with Bathsheba. Having become one of the Divine Shepherd's flock, he testified: "The Lord turneth back my soul." The Christian who is enjoying unbroken communion with his Lord will then be able to say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." (Psalm 103:1)

\*\*\*\*\*