

The Doctrine of Man

In the day in which we live there are many views of man circulating and held. One of the most widespread is that which we call the naturalistic view of man.

The Naturalistic View

This view of man maintains that man is "*but an accidental collocation (coming together) of atoms.*" Man in other words is the product of chance. "*Man's number came up in the Monte Carlo games*" is the way one humanist, Jaques Monod, described it.

All this is in stark contrast to the Biblical view of man, as stated for example in the eightieth Psalm.

*What is man that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?
For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.
Thou madest him have dominion over the works of thy hands, and hast, thou hast put all things under his feet.*

This view of man i.e. the Christian view of man has in recent years been subject to a massive attack by militant secularists.

This naturalistic view of man has been defined as follows:

The general philosophical position which has as its fundamental tenet or proposition, the belief that the natural world is the whole of reality. "Nature" and "natural world" are certainly ambiguous terms, but this much is clear: in thus restricting reality, naturalism means to assert that there is one system or level of reality; that this system is the totality of objects and events in space and time; and that the behaviour of this system is determined only by its own character and is reducible to a set of causal laws. Nature is thus conceived as self-contained and self-dependent, and from this view spring certain negations that define to a great extent the influence of naturalism.

Firstly, *it is denied that nature is derived from or dependent upon any transcendent, supernatural entities.*

Secondly *there follows the denial that the order of natural events can be intruded upon. And this in turn entails the denial of freedom, purpose, and transcendent destiny.*

The Dictionary of Philosophy ed D.D. Runes. p. 205

According to this view God is not mindful of men because there is no God. Or even if God did exist, he could not be conscious of man.

The earth is a huge grinding machine. Man is part of this great mechanism, with no individual purpose, freedom, or destiny beyond the realm of time.

According to the naturalistic view there is no God who intervenes in history at any time. The natural world is a closed system and the order of the great world machine will inevitably take its course come what may.

Far from man being a little lower than the angels, and the Hebrew original in the first actually means Elohim, God, according to the naturalistic philosopher man is just a bit higher than the amino acids from which he effervesced i.e. bubbled up from the primeval mud.

Such a view clearly does not regard man's position as full of glory and honour.

Under such a philosophy man has no right to exercise authority over creation. He has in fact no more rights than the animals; indeed the animals might have at times more rights than he has. These ideas as we can see are at the root of the animal rights movement and those more zany teachings that when you pluck up cabbage in the garden you apologise to it for the fact that you are going to pluck it up and eat it and cannot help doing so because you're controlled by an irresistible mechanistic desire to do so.

The most eloquent expression of the naturalistic view is that expressed in the words of the British mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell:

That man is the product of causes that had no provision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, the intensity of thought and feeling can preserve and individual life beyond the grave, but all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins -- all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built....

Brief and powerless is man's life, on him and all his race the slow, surely doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for man, condemned today to lose his dearest tomorrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that enoble his little day... proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideas have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.

The Biblical Doctrine of Man Gordon. H. Clark p.vi

It is no accident that both these naturalistic philosopher's Russell and Monod, began by denying God and ended up advocating the creation of a totalitarian world government.

Russell advocated:

The creation of a single worldwide authority, possessing a monopoly of all the more serious weapons.... The vital point is the placing of irresistible force in the hands of the central authority..... The central Government may be democratic or totalitarian; it may owe its origin to consent of conquest..... I do not

believe that the human race has sufficient statesmanship or capacity for mutual forbearance to establish a world Government on the basis of consent alone. That is why I think that an element of force will be needed in its establishment and in its preservation through the early years of its existence....

Modern man is master of his fate.

Ibid p. vii

These things therefore have very wide implications. Russell is really teaching the modern man is not the master of his fate but that some men are masters of the fate of others.

The Biblical View of Man

The Bible teaches that God created the human race, as He also created the solar system the sand on the seashore and everything else.

The Bible teaches a theistic philosophy of life, which is to be distinguished from the diestic philosophy of life i.e. the 18th-century phenomena which taught that God created the world but is now largely disinterested in it and absent from it. Theism teaches that God made the world and is still working and active in the world at all times.

It also emphasises the fact that mankind though created as all other things in the universe are created, is nevertheless different from the rest of creation. Man is unique in the created order of things.

The physical universe is but a backdrop or stage setting for the Divine Drama in which man is the main actor. In the largest sense God is the main actor, as well as the author. But among created things, when history is taken as the drama of redemption, man plays the title role.

Some people, called scientists, legitimately study the stage setting with its lighting arrangements but the play itself is the essential thing.

Ibid p 1

The Bible clearly asserts that man was created.

Genesis 1 : 27 *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female, created he them."*

Genesis 2: 21 – 23 *"and the Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and... Made he a woman... and Adam said, This is now bone of my bones...She shall be called woman."*

Acts 17:26 *"God... Hath made of one blood all nations of men."*

Again this aspect of truth has been under severe attack in recent years. In the USA the exponents of the evolutionary theory have so worked that a ban has been placed on the teaching of the theistic view of the origins of life in all government funded schools and colleges.

Gordon H. Clark the Presbyterian comments:

Perhaps this is an indication of the intellectual weakness of the evolutionary theory. Scholars used to insist on freedom of thought and expression. Today the organised educators use legal force to ban the views they dislike. This method of legal repression may be subconsciously supported by the suspicion that scientific theories are tentative only. In physics the Newtonian synthesis has been abandoned. One can say that in biology Darwinianism is not universally accepted; and what new theories century twenty- one will see, no one can guess. The evolutionists must rely on political restraint.

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Evolutionism as well as naturalism can here again be seen to be working against freedom and true science. One famous example of how evolutionism has attempted to corrupt true scientific investigation is the well-known story Pitiedown Man.

Someone in England planted a hoax where he knew the excavations would soon be made. He use chemicals to age the tooth of an ape and buried it. When the excavators found it the scientist -- cartoonist, blew it up with jaws, hair, legs, torso and called it the Pitiedown Man. Museums displayed him to overawed visitors. There were, however, a few, a very few, reputable scientists who were cautious and sceptical. But so great was their submission to the theory of evolution that they finally capitulated to the majority opinion. It was almost half a century later that the dishonesty of the perpetrator and the uninhibited imagination of the reconstructors were discovered. During which time the Pitiedown Man was a standard item of evolutionary proof in college zoology courses.

Ibid p.3

Man made in the Image and Likeness of God

Instead of assigning to man a subhuman ancestry the Bible teaches and insists that man was created in the image of God.

The Bible makes an immense difference and distinction between man and the animals. Of course animals are amazing and fascinating. We can think of the power and streamlined magnificence of a horse, a tiger, a jaguar or lion.

*Tiger, tiger burning bright,
In the forest of the night
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry.*

William Blake

But man is greater than the animals. He is made in the image and likeness of God.

How do we define what we mean by made in the image and likeness of God?

1. Any interpretation which identifies the image with some characteristic not found in God must be incorrect.

2. This likeness is not in terms of physical likeness. It is not in the fact that man is made to walk in the upright position, though in a sense we could say this is symbolic of his dignity under God. Genesis makes no reference to physical image.
3. Calvin adds:

It was not possible.... For God to act more liberally towards man than by impressing his own glory upon him.

The image of God (in man) includes all the excellence in which the nature of man surpasses all the other species of animals. The term, therefore, denotes the integrity which Adam possessed, when he was endued with a right understanding, when he had affections regulated by reason, and all his senses governed in the proper order, and when, in the excellency of his nature, he truly resembled the excellency of his Creator. And though the principal seat of the Divine image was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its faculties, yet there was no part of man, not even the body, which was not adorned with some rays of its glory.

Inst: 1:xv.3

4. The word "image" and "likeness" we use synonymously and interchangeably, they do not refer to different things.
5. Man was created in the likeness of God, that likeness was not something with which man was endowed with later on.
6. The usual opinion is that the word "likeness" was added to "image" to express the idea that the image was most like a perfect image. God was the original of which man was made a copy.
7. It means that man not only bears the image of God but that he is His very image. This is clearly stated in 1 Corinthians 11: 7

"He (man) is the image and glory of God."

The image of God is not something man has somewhere inside of him, or somewhere on the surface, as if God had first created man and then stamped him with a signet ring. No the image is not something man has, man is the image.

The image of God does not referred to man's body, because God is a Spirit. It must therefore refer to man's soul. It is man's soul which is made in the image or likeness of God.

We may then ask what was there in man's soul, as he was originally created which was like God?

We can answer as follows:

1. God is a Person or rather three-Persons and one God, and man is also a person. In this sense man is like God.

What a stupendous mystery this is says Gresham Machin.

What a stupendous mystery that is! Here is man, a finite creature, product of God's created hand, walking here upon this earth in a body made of the dust of the ground. Yet this being, so contemptible as he might at first sight seem, possesses the strange and terrible gift of personal freedom, and is capable of personal companionship with the infinite and eternal God. That the Bible certainly means when it says that God created man in his own image.

The Christian View of Man p 145

2. It means we might emphasize from the above that man was made with personal freedom.
3. It also means that man was made like God, in that he was good.

Roman Catholic teaching insists that man was not created originally righteous. Rather that Adam was at first morally neutral. They speak of man as created with a pull either way to do good or evil. God made man they say, however with his natural powers so adjusted that the lower desires were in a subordinate position to the higher desires. Beside this man was also given the gift of the supernatural likeness to God. This was added to the original constitution of man, either immediately at the time of creation, or at some later point as a reward for man's proper use of his natural powers.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that it was this supernatural gift that was lost at the time of the Fall.

Adam's fall then resulted in the loss of original righteousness; but he fell only to the neutral moral level on which he was created. In this state, because of his free will, he is able, at least in some low degree, to please God.

Obviously this view has some soteriological implications. Even though the neutral state was soon defaced by voluntary sins, man without saving grace could still obey God's commands upon occasion. After regeneration a man could do even more than God requires. This then becomes the foundation of the Roman Catholic doctrine of the Treasury of the Saints. If a particular man does not himself earn a sufficient number of merits, the Pope can transfer from the saint's accounts as many more merits as are necessary for his entrance into heaven. One horrendous implication of all this is that although Christ's death remains necessary to salvation, it is not sufficient. Human merit is indispensable.

The Biblical Doctrine of Man Clark p 13

For the Protestant view see page 209 of Berkhof.

4. Man made in the image and likeness of God also means that man has the capacity to reason.

The image must be reason because God is truth, and fellowship with him - a most important purpose in creation requires thinking and understanding. Without reason man would doubtless glorify God as do the stars, stones, and animals; but he could not enjoy him forever. Even if in God's providence animals survived death and adorn the heavenly realm, they cannot have what the Scripture calls eternal life because eternal life consists in knowing the only true God, and knowledge is an exercise of the mind

or reason. Without reason there can be no morality or righteousness: These too require thought. Lacking these, animals are neither righteous nor sinful.

Ibid p 16

God has made Man - Body and Soul

The twofold division of the nature of man is the Scriptural view of man.

However there are believers who have thought that the Bible teaches a threefold division of the nature of man. They teach that man is made up of body, soul and spirit. We sometimes speak of this in terms of the bi-partate nature of man and the tri-partate nature of man.

Those who take the latter view speak of the soul as comprising the faculties of intellect, feeling and will and the spirit comprising of those elements which have to do with man's walk and communion with God.

The second chapter of 1st Corinthians and part of the third chapter is very helpful in clearing this controversy.

Gresham Machin's comments on this old controversy are very helpful:

We ought to reject very firmly, therefore the view that the nature of man is divided by the Bible into body, soul and spirit. The more I reflect about this matter the more I am convinced that the view of the threefold nature of man is a rather serious error. It is an error that has been held by a great many devout believers and it has been learnedly and reverently defended: and yet it is a serious error all the same.

It encourages what may be called an "empty room" view of the presence of God in the redeemed man -- the notion of the before a man becomes a Christian he is pretty much all right except that there is one room in him that is vacant, the room that ought to be the temple of God. It encourages, in other words, the notion that what happens when a man becomes a Christian is merely the one part of the man's nature, the "spiritual" part, a part previously neglected, is developed and given the place which it ought to have in human life.

Such a notion fails to do justice to the teachings of the Bible. The real state of human nature after the fall of man is not that one part of it has been cut off and can attain only a stunted growth, but that all of it is corrupt. The real thing that happens when a man becomes a Christian is not that God is set up and enthroned within in a part of man's nature which before was like an empty room, but that the whole man, corrupt before because of sin, is transformed by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God.

I think we ought to be very clear, then that the Bible does not distinguish the human spirit from the human soul. No doubt these two words designate the same thing into different ways, and it would be interesting to study the difference between them; but the important thing to observe is that they do designate the same thing. They are just two different words to designate what we call in English either man's soul or man's spirit, and which, in order to avoid confusion, we shall now speak of as man's soul

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Hodge comments:

This doctrine of the threefold constitution of man being adopted by Plato, was introduced partially in the early church, but soon came to be regarded as dangerous, if not heretical. Its being held by the Gnostics that the spirit in man was a part of the divine essence, and incapable of sin; and by the Apollinarians that Christ had only a human body and soul, but not a human spirit the church rejected the doctrine that the soul and spirit were distinct substances, since upon it those heresies were founded. In later times the Semi Pelagians taught that the soul and body, but not the spirit in man were the subjects of original sin. All Protestants, Lutheran and Reformed, were, therefore the more zealous in maintaining that the soul and spirit are one and the same substance and essence. And this, has become the common doctrine of the church.

The Relation of the Body and Soul to each other

The relationship of body and soul to each other remains as yet as a mystery.

The following theories have been set out:

1. Monistic- the theory that body and soul are of the same primitive substance.

Materialism says that the primitive substance is matter and that body and soul and all things are derived from matter.

Spiritualism says that the primitive substance is spirit, therefore body and soul and all thing are derived from spirit.

The objection to the monistic view says Berkhof is that things so different as body and soul cannot be deduced the one from the other.

2. The dualistic theory - this we may accept in so far as it embodies the truth that body and soul are distinct substances, which do interact, though their mode of interaction escapes human scrutiny and remains a mystery for us. The union between the two may be called a union of life. (See Berkhof Page 195)

The Origin of the Soul in the Individual Traducianism or Creationism

Greek philosophy devoted a great deal of attention to the problem of the human soul and did not fail to make its influence felt in theology.

The nature, the origin, and the continued existence of the soul, were all subjects of discussion. Plato believed in the pre- existence and the transmigration of the soul.

- a. The early church under the influence of Alexandrian teaching came to believe in the pre-existence of the soul. Origen was one of the chief exponents of this view.
- b. Creationism, (not to be confused with the creationism we speak of today in respect to the origins of the world) refers to the belief that God creates a new soul at the birth of every individual. This was the dominant theory of the Eastern Church and also found some advocates in the West. Jerome was one of its most prominent representatives.
- c. The Traducianist theory however gradually gained ground in the West. According to this view the soul as well as the body of man originates by propagation.

According to Traducianism the souls of men are propagated along with the bodies by generation, and are therefore transmitted to the children by the parents. In the early church Tertullian, Rufinus, Apollinarus, and Gregory of Nyssa were Traducianists. From the days of Luther Traducianism has been the prevailing view of the Lutheran Church. Among the Reformed it is favoured by A.H. Strong and Shedd

Berkhof adds,

Caution is required in speaking on the subject. It must be admitted that the arguments on both sides are rather well balanced. In view of this fact it is not surprising that Augustine found it rather hard to choose between the two. The Bible makes no direct statement respecting the origin of the soul of man.

Berkof himself leans towards the Creationist position (See p.20 Systematic Theology)