

Week Two

Quarter 2

The Essential Nature of Man

Outline

- Trichotomy, Dichotomy, and Monism
- Biblical Data
- Arguments for Trichotomy
- Responses to Trichotomy
- Scripture Does Speak of an Immaterial Part of Man that Can Exist Without His Body
- Where do Souls Come From?

Trichotomy, Dichotomy, and Monism

- Trichotomy
 - Three separate parts – body, soul, and spirit
 - Body = body
 - Soul = intellect, emotions, and will
 - Spirit = a higher faculty in man that becomes alive when a person becomes a Christian
- Dichotomy
 - Two separate parts – body and soul/spirit
- Monism
 - Only one element – the person himself

Scripture Uses “Soul” & “Spirit” Interchangeably (1)

- Words
 - “Soul” – Heb *nephesh*, Gk. *Psyche*
 - “Spirit” – Heb *ruach*, Gk. *Pneuma*
- Bible translations
 - Many recent translations (especially the NIV) do not consistently translated the Hebrew and Greek terms as “soul” and “spirit”
 - Recent translations may substitute “life”, “mind”, “heart”, or even “person”
 - The RSV is more literal, and is used in this chapter
- Biblical examples
 - “Now is my *soul* troubled” (John 12:27)
 - “troubled in *spirit*” (John 13:21)
 - “My (Mary’s) *soul* magnifies the Lord, and my *spirit* rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47)
 - What are the dead called?
 - Heb 12:23 calls them spirits
 - Rev 6:9 calls them souls

Scripture Uses “Soul” & “Spirit” Interchangeably (2)

- Soul
 - When Rachel died, “Her *soul* was departing” (Gen 35:18)
 - Elijah prayer that the dead child’s “soul” would come into him again (1 Kings 17:21)
 - “This night your *soul* is required of you” (Luke 12:20)
- Spirit
 - “Into Your hand I commit my *spirit*” (Ps 31:5, Luke 23:46)
 - At death, “the *spirit* returns to God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7)
 - When Jesus was dying, “He bowed His head and gave up His *spirit*” (John 19:30)
- Scripture nowhere says that a person gave up their “soul and spirit” when they died

Scripture Uses “Soul” & “Spirit” Interchangeably (3)

- Man is said to be either “Body and Soul” or “Body and Spirit”
 - “fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt 10:28)
 - Paul wanted the Corinthian church to deliver an erring brother to Satan “for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor 5:5)
 - “the body apart from the spirit is dead” (James 2:26)
- The “Soul” and the “Spirit” can sin
 - “from every defilement of body and *spirit*” (2 Cor 7:1)
 - The unmarried woman is concerned with how to be holy “in body and *spirit*”
 - “Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your *souls* for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart” (1 Pet 1:22)

Thinking, Feeling, and Deciding

- Trichotomists state that these are activities of the soul – not the spirit
 - Paul’s “spirit was provoked within him” (Acts 17:16)
 - Jesus was “troubled in spirit” (John 13:21)
 - You can have a “downcast spirit” (Prov 17:22)
 - Jesus was “perceiving in His spirit” (Mark 2:8)
 - The Holy Spirit “bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom 8:16)
 - Paul asks “What person knows a man’s thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him?” (1 Cor 2:11)
- We should not slip into the mistake of thinking that certain activities (such as thinking, feeling, or deciding things) are done by only one part of us. Rather, these activities are done by the whole person. (pg 476)

Relating to God in Worship & Prayer

- Trichotomists claim that these are the actions of the *spirit*
- Worship passages
 - “To You, O Lord, I lift up my *soul*” (Ps 25:1)
 - “For God alone my *soul* waits in silence” (Ps 62:1)
 - “Bless the Lord, O my *soul*; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” (Ps 103:1)
 - “Praise the Lord, O my *soul*!” (Ps 146:1)
 - “My *soul* magnifies the Lord” (Luke 1:46)
- Prayer passages
 - Hannah said “I have been pouring out my *soul* before the Lord” (1 Sam 1:15)
 - “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your *soul*, and with all your might” (Deut 6:5)
 - Our *souls* can long for God and thirst for Him (Ps 42:1,2)
 - “My *soul* will rejoice in the Lord, exulting in His deliverance” (Ps 35:9)
 - “My *soul* is consumed with longing for Your ordinances at all times” (Ps 119:20)
 - “My *soul* keeps your testimonies; I love them exceedingly” (Ps 119:167)
- There seems to be no part of our life or relationship to God in which Scripture says our spirits are active rather than our souls

Arguments for Trichotomy & Rebuttal

1. **Argument:** “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your *spirit and soul and body* be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thes 5:23)
Rebuttal: Paul could be simply piling up synonyms for emphasis
 - “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matt 22:37)
 - Does this mean that the soul is different from the mind?
 - Taken to the extreme, five or six different “parts” could be identified

Arguments for Trichotomy & Rebuttal

2. **Argument:** “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the *division of the soul and spirit*, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12)
- Rebuttal:** The author never says that the word can divide the soul from the spirit
- The penetrating power of the word of God is being emphasized in different forms here
 - It is so powerful that it will search out and expose all disobedience and lack of submission to God
 - Note that joints are the places where bones touch – not marrow!

Arguments for Trichotomy & Rebuttal

- 3. Argument:** 1 Cor 3:1 talks of those “of the flesh” or “unspiritual” (1 Cor 2:14), while distinguishing them from those who are “spiritual” (1 Cor 2:15)
→ doesn’t this indicate a different element of the latter group’s nature
- Rebuttal:** The word “spiritual” seems to mean “influenced by the Holy Spirit”
- Paul is not talking about different parts of man, but about the effect of being influenced by the Holy Spirit

Arguments for Trichotomy & Rebuttal

4. **Argument:** “If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful” (1 Cor 14:14) → isn’t Paul’s mind doing something different from his spirit?
- Rebuttal:** Paul is saying that he does not understand the context of what he is praying
- He does imply that there is a nonphysical component to his being (his spirit)
 - Nothing states, though, that this spirit is different from his soul
 - Paul could have equally said “My soul prays but my mind is unfruitful”

Arguments for Trichotomy & Rebuttal

5. **Argument:** Personal experience – people have a spiritual awareness or perception of God’s presence (to bless) that is different from ordinary processes or emotional experiences
- Rebuttal:** Both sides agree on this awareness, but disagree on what it is
- A dichotomist would agree that it is different from our conscious, rational thought process
 - Instead, they would simply state that this is the spirit or soul (which are synonyms)

Arguments for Trichotomy & Rebuttal

6. **Argument:** Our spirit is what makes us different from animals

Rebuttal: This does not mean that we have to say that we have a part distinct from our souls and bodies that animals do not

- We are different from animals
 - Spiritual abilities
 - Able to relate to God in worship and prayer
 - We enjoy a spiritual life in fellowship with God (who is a spirit)
- Do animals have a “soul”?
 - If “soul” means “intellect, emotions, and will”, then **yes** (at least the higher ones)
 - If “soul” means the immaterial element of our nature that relates to God and lives forever, then **no**

Arguments for Trichotomy & Rebuttal

7. **Argument:** Our spirit is what comes alive at regeneration
Rebuttal: The bible talks about unbelievers who have spirits
- Sihon, King of Heshbon (Deut 2:30) – the Lord “hardened his spirit”
 - Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 5:20) – “his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly”
 - The unfaithful people of Israel (Ps 78:8) – their “spirit was not faithful to God”
 - We as whole persons were “dead” in “trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1), but we were made alive to God, and we now must consider ourselves “dead to sin and alive to God” (Rom 6:11)

Dichotomy vs. Trichotomy Conclusions

- None of the trichotomy arguments are very convincing
- Scripture's use of soul and spirit so interchangeably is overwhelming on the side of dichotomy
- In the end, it is pointless for us to try to determine which part of our body or soul / spirit is responsible for what
 - Our whole selves are responsible for sin
 - Our whole selves are created to glorify God
 - All aspects of our lives should be continually maturing

Scripture Does Speak of an Immaterial Part of Man that Can Exist Without His Body

- The perception that we have a spirit or soul belongs to the invisible, spiritual realm, and is only a subjective perception
- Our knowledge of such is based on scripture – not just perception
 - Jesus told the dying thief “Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43)
 - Stephen prayed as he was dying “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59)
 - Paul does not fear death – “My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” (Phil 1:23)
- While today, our body and spirit /soul are united and act as one person, there will be a time when our spirits will temporarily exist apart from our physical bodies

Where Do Our Souls Come From?

- Creationism
 - God creates a new soul for each person and sends it to that person's body sometime between conception and birth
 - Supported by Roman Catholic Church, Martin Luther, A.H. Strong (a Calvinist theologian)
- Traducianism
 - The soul as well as the body of a child are inherited from the baby's mother and father at the time of conception
 - Supported by John Calvin
- Pre-existentism
 - The souls of people exist in heaven long before their bodies are conceived in the wombs of their mothers, and that God then brings the soul to earth to be joined with the baby's body as he or she grows in the womb
 - Not held by any flavors of Christianity and is dangerously similar to the Eastern concept of reincarnation
 - Note that there is no scripture to support this view

Creationism Support

- “sons are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward” (Ps 127:3)
 - Not only the son, but also the entire person of the child, including the body, is a gift from god
 - In this case, it seems strange to think of the mother and father as being responsible by themselves for any aspect of the child’s existence
- David says that the Lord “knit me together in my mother’s womb” (Ps 139:13)
- Isaiah says that God gives breath to the people on the earth and “spirit to those who walk in it” (Is 42:5)
- Zechariah talks of God as “the Father of spirits” (Heb 12:9)
- The author of Hebrews speaks of God as “the Father of spirits” (Heb 12:9)

Traducianism Support

- God created man in His own image (Gen 1:27)
 - Does this include the ability to “create” other human beings like ourselves?
 - Other animals bear descendents “according to their kinds” (Gen 1:24)
- When Melchizedek met Abraham, “Levi...was still in the loins of his ancestor” (Heb 7:10)
- This viewpoint may also help explain how the sins of the parents can be passed on to the children without making God directly responsible for the creation of a soul that is sinful or has a disposition that would tend toward sin (pg 484)

Which One is Right?

- We do not have enough information in scripture to definitively say
- Theologically, the impact on other areas of belief is small
- In the end, we can say that God and mankind actively contribute to the creation of a new human, but to which degree each is involved is up to debate

Reading For Next Week

- Chapter 24
 - Sin
 - Homework – questions 1-7 (all)
- Chapter 25
 - The Covenants Between God and Man
 - Homework – questions 1-2 (all)