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THE NATURE OF MAN

Man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. Though created free beings, each is an indivisible unity of body, mind, and spirit, dependent upon God for life and breath and all else. When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position under God. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker. Created for the glory of God, they are called to love Him and one another, and to care for their environment.

And "God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.'" God did not speak into existence His crowning creation. Instead, He lovingly stooped to shape this new creature from the dust of the earth.

Earth's most creative sculptor could never carve out such a noble being. Perhaps a Michelangelo could fashion a stunning exterior, but what of the anatomy and physiology carefully designed for function, as well as for beauty?

The perfect sculpture lay completed with every hair, eyelash, and nail in place, but God was not finished. This man was not to collect dust, but to live, to think, to create, and to grow in glory. Stooping over this magnificent form, the Creator "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7; cf. 1:26). Realizing man's need for companionship, God made "him a helper comparable to him." God caused "a deep sleep" to come over Adam and, as Adam slept, God extracted one of Adam's ribs and made it into a woman (Gen. 2:18,21,22). "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." A garden home more splendid than the finest on earth today was given Adam and Eve. There were trees, vines, flowers, hills, valleys—all adorned by the Master Himself. Two special trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, were there. God gave Adam and Eve permission to eat freely of every tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:8,9,17).

Thus the crowning event of Creation week was accomplished. And "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen. 1:31).

The Origin of Man

Though today many believe that human beings originated from the lower forms of animal life and are the result of natural processes that took billions of years, such an idea

cannot be harmonized with the Biblical record. That human beings have been subject to a process of degeneration is crucial to the Biblical view of the nature of man.

God Created Man

The origin of the human race is found in a divine council. God said, "Let Us make man" (Gen. 1:26). The plural "Us" refers to the trinitarian Godhead-God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit (see chapter 2 of this book). Of one purpose, then, God began to create the first human being (Gen. 1:27).

Created From the Dust of the Ground

God formed man from "the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7), using pre-existing matter but not other forms of life, such as marine or land animals. Not until He had formed every organ and put it in its place did He introduce the "breath of life" that made man a living person.

Created after a Divine Type

God created each of the other animals-fishes, birds, reptiles, insects, mammals, etc.-"according to its kind" (Gen. 1:21,24,25). Each species had a typical form of its own and the ability to reproduce its specific kind. Man, however, was created after the divine type, not after a type of the animal kingdom. God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). There is a clear discontinuity between human beings and the animal kingdom. Luke's genealogical entry describing the origin of the human race expresses this difference simply, but profoundly: "Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38).

Man's Exalted Position

The creation of man was the zenith of all Creation. God put man, created in the image of the sovereign God, in charge of Planet Earth and all animal life. L. Berkhof states of Adam, "It was his duty and privilege to make all the nature and all created beings that were placed under his rule, subservient to his will and purpose, in order that he and his whole glorious dominion might magnify the almighty Creator and Lord of the universe, Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:4-9."

The Unity of the Human Race

The genealogies in Genesis demonstrate that the successive generations after Adam and Eve all descended from this first pair. As humans, we all share the same nature, which constitutes a genetic or genealogical unity. Paul said, "From one man he [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth" (Acts 17:26, NIV).

Furthermore, we see other indications of the organic unity of our race in the Biblical assertions that Adam's transgression brought sin and death upon all, and in the provision of salvation for all through Christ (Rom. 5:12,19; 1 Cor. 15:21,22).

The Unity of Man's Nature

What are the characteristic parts of human beings? Are they made up of several independent components, such as a body, a soul, and a spirit?

The Breath of Life

God "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7).

When God changed the elements of earth into a living being, He "breathed" the "breath of life" into the nostrils of Adam's lifeless body. This breath of life is "the breath of the Almighty" that gives life (Job 33:4)--the spark of life. We might compare it with the streams of electricity that, when they flow through various electrical components, transform a quiet, gray panel of glass in a box into a pulsating splash of color and action--when we flip the switch on a color TV. The electricity brings sound and motion where once there was nothing.

Man-a Living Soul

What did the breath of life do? When God formed the human being from the elements of the earth, all the organs were present: the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, spleen, brain, etc.--all perfect, but lifeless. Then God breathed into this lifeless matter the breath of life and "man became a living being."

The scriptural equation is straightforward: the dust of the ground (earth's elements) + the breath of life = a living being, or living soul. The union of earth's elements with the breath of life resulted in a living being, or soul.

This "breath of life" is not limited to people. Every living creature possesses it. The Bible, for example, attributes the breath of life to both those animals that went into Noah's ark and those that did not (Gen. 7:15,22).

The Hebrew term in Genesis 2:7 that has been translated "living being" or "living soul" is nephesh chayyah. This expression does not exclusively designate man, for it also refers to marine animals, insects, reptiles, and beasts (Gen. 1:20,24; 2:19).

Nephesh, translated as "being" or "soul," comes from naphash, meaning "to breathe." Its Greek equivalent in the New Testament is psuche. "Inasmuch as breath is the most conspicuous evidence of life, nephesh basically designates man as a living being, a person." When used of animals, as in the Creation story, it describes them as living creatures that God created.

It is important to note that the Bible says that man became a living soul. Nothing in the Creation account indicates that man received a soul--some kind of separate entity that, at Creation was united with the human body.

An Indivisible Unity

The importance of the Creation account for properly understanding the nature of man cannot be overestimated. By stressing his organic unity, Scripture portrays man as a whole. How then do the soul and spirit relate to the nature of man?

1. The Biblical meaning of soul.

As we have already mentioned, in the Old Testament "soul" is a translation of the Hebrew *nephesh*. In Genesis 2:7 it denotes man as a living being after the breath of life entered into a physical body formed from the elements of the earth. "Similarly, a new soul comes into existence whenever a child is born, each 'soul' being a new unit of life uniquely different, and separate, from other similar units. This quality of individuality in each living being, which constitutes it a unique entity, seems to be the idea emphasized by the Hebrew term *nephesh*. When used in this sense *nephesh* is not a part of the person; it is the person, and, in many instances, is translated 'person' (see Gen. 14:21; Num. 5:6; Deut. 10:22; cf. Ps. 3:2) or 'self' (Lev. 11:43; 1 Kings 19:4; Isa. 46:2; etc.).

"On the other hand, expressions such as 'my soul,' 'your soul,' 'his soul,' etc., are generally idioms for the personal pronouns 'I,' 'me,' 'you,' 'he,' etc. (see Gen. 12:13; Lev. 11:43,44; 19:8; Joshua 23:11; Ps. 3:2; Jer. 37:9; etc.). In more than 100 of 755 occurrences in the Old Testament the KJV translates *nephesh* as 'life' (Gen. 9:4,5; 1 Sam. 19:5; Job 2:4,6; Ps. 31:13; etc.).

"Often *nephesh* refers to desires, appetites, or passions (cf. Deuteronomy 23:24; Proverbs 23:2; Ecclesiastes 6:7), and is sometimes translated 'appetite' (Prov. 23:2; Eccl. 6:7). It may refer to the seat of the affections (Gen. 34:3; S. of Sol. 1:7; etc.), and at times it represents the volitional part of man, as when translated 'pleasure' (KJV) in Deuteronomy 23:24; Psalm 105:22; Jeremiah 34:16. In Numbers 31:19 the *nephesh* is 'killed,' and in Judges 16:30 (translated 'me') it dies. In Numbers 5:2 ('the dead') and ch. 9:6 ('dead body') it refers to a corpse (cf. Lev. 19:28; Num. 9:7,10).

"The usage of the Greek word *psuche* in the New Testament is similar to that of *nephesh* in the Old Testament. It is used of animal life as well as human life (Rev. 16:3). In the KJV it is translated forty times simply as 'life' or 'lives' (see Matt. 2:20; 6:25; 16:25; etc.). In some instances it is used to mean simply 'people' (see Acts 7:14; 27:37; Rom. 13:1, 1 Peter 3:20; etc.), and in others it is equivalent to the personal pronoun (see Matt. 12:18; 2 Cor. 12:15; etc.). Sometimes it refers to the emotions (Mark 14:34; Luke 2:35), to the mind (Acts 14:2; Phil. 1:27), or to the heart (Eph. 6:6)."

The *psuche* is not immortal, but subject to death (Rev. 16:3). It can be destroyed (Matt. 10:28). The Biblical evidence indicates that sometimes *nephesh* and *psuche* refer to the whole person and at other times to a particular aspect of man, such as the affections, emotions, appetites, and feelings. This usage, however, in no way shows that man is a being made up of two separate and distinct parts. The body and the soul exist together; together they form an indivisible union. The soul has no conscious existence apart from the body. There is no text that indicates that the soul survives the body as a conscious entity.

2. The Biblical meaning of spirit.

Whereas the Hebrew word *nephesh* translated soul, denotes individuality or personality, the Old Testament Hebrew word *ruach*, translated spirit, refers to the energizing spark of

life essential to individual existence. It stands for the divine energy, or life principle, that animates human beings.

"Ruach occurs 377 times in the Old Testament and most frequently is translated 'spirit,' 'wind,' or 'breath' (Gen. 8:1, etc.). It is also used to denote vitality (Judges 15:19), courage (Joshua 2:11), temper or anger (Judges 8:3), disposition (Isa. 54:6), moral character (Eze. 11:19), and the seat of the emotions (1 Sam. 1:15).

"In the sense of breath, the ruach of men is identical with the ruach of animals (Eccl. 3:19). The ruach of man leaves the body at death (Ps. 146:4) and returns to God (Eccl. 12:7; cf. Job 34:14). Ruach is used frequently of the Spirit of God, as in Isaiah 63:10. Never in the Old Testament, with respect to man, does ruach denote an intelligent entity capable of sentient existence apart from a physical body.

"The New Testament equivalent of ruach is pneuma, 'spirit,' from pneo, 'to blow,' or 'to breathe.' As with ruach, there is nothing inherent in the word pneuma denoting an entity in man capable of conscious existence apart from the body, nor does New Testament usage with respect to man in any way imply such a concept. In such passages as Romans 8:15; 1 Corinthians 4:21; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:6 pneuma denotes 'mood,' 'attitude,' or 'state of feeling.' It is also used of various aspects of the personality, as in Galatians 6:1; Romans 12:11; etc. As with ruach, the pneuma is yielded to the Lord at death (Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59). Like ruach, pneuma is also used of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:11,14; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 2:4; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:21; etc.)."

3. Unity of body, soul, and spirit.

What is the relationship between body, soul, and spirit? What is the influence of this relationship on the unity of man?

a. A twofold union.

Although the Bible views the nature of man as a unity, it does not precisely define the relationship between body, soul, and spirit. At times soul and spirit are used interchangeably. Notice their parallelism in Mary's expression of joy following the annunciation: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:46,47).

In one instance man is characterized by Jesus as body and soul (Matt. 10:28) and in another instance by Paul as body and spirit (1 Cor. 7:34). In the former soul refers to the higher faculty of man, presumably the mind, through which he communicates with God. In the latter spirit refers to this higher faculty. In both instances the body includes the physical, as well as the emotional, aspects of a person.

b. A threefold union.

There is one exception to the general characterization of man as comprising a twofold union. Paul, who spoke of the twofold union of body and spirit, also spoke in terms of a threefold union. He states, "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:23). This passage conveys Paul's desire that none of these aspects of the person be excluded from the sanctification process.

In this instance spirit may be understood as "the higher principle of intelligence and thought with which man is endowed, and with which God can communicate by His Spirit (see Rom. 8:16). It is by the renewing of the mind through the activities of the Holy Spirit that the individual is transformed into Christ's likeness (see Rom. 12:1,2).

"By `soul'...when distinguished from spirit, may be understood that part of man's nature that finds expression through the instincts, emotions, and desires. This part of one's nature can be sanctified, too. When, through the working of the Holy Spirit, the mind is brought into conformity with God's mind, and sanctified reason bears sway over the lower nature, the impulses, which would otherwise be contrary to God, become subject to His will."

The body, which is controlled by either the higher or the lower nature, is the physical constitution-the flesh, blood, and bones.

Paul's sequence of first the spirit, then the soul, and finally the body is no coincidence. When the spirit is sanctified, the mind is under divine control. The sanctified mind, in turn, will have a sanctifying influence on the soul, i.e., the desires, feelings, and emotions. The person in whom this sanctification takes place will not abuse his body, so his physical health will flourish. Thus the body becomes the sanctified instrument through which the Christian can serve His Lord and Saviour. Paul's call for sanctification is clearly rooted in the concept of the unity of human nature and reveals that effective preparation for Christ's second advent necessitates the preparation of the whole person-spirit, soul, and body.

c. An indivisible, sympathetic union.

It is clear that each human being is an indivisible unity. The body, soul, and spirit function in close cooperation, revealing an intensely sympathetic relationship between a person's spiritual, mental, and physical faculties. Deficiencies in one area will hamper the other two. A sick, impure, or confused spirit or mind will have a detrimental effect on one's emotional and physical health, as well. The reverse is also true. A weak, sick, or suffering physical constitution will generally impair one's emotional and spiritual health. The impact the faculties have on each other means that each individual has a God-given responsibility to maintain the faculties in the best possible condition. Doing so is a vital part of being restored into the image of the Creator.

Man in the Image of God

The living beings that God created on the sixth day of Creation were made "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:27). What does being created in God's image imply?

Created in the Image and Likeness of God

It is frequently suggested that human moral and spiritual dimensions reveal something about God's moral and spiritual nature. But since the Bible teaches that man comprises an indivisible unity of body, mind, and soul, man's physical features must also, in some way, reflect God's image. But isn't God a spirit? How could a spirit being be associated with any form or shape?

A brief study of the angels reveals that they, like God, are spiritual beings (Heb. 1:7,14). Yet they always appear in human form (Gen. 18:1-19:22; Dan. 9:21; Luke 1:11-38; Acts 12:5-10). Could it be that a spiritual being may have a "spiritual body" with a form and features (cf. 1 Cor. 15:44)?

The Bible indicates that some people have seen parts of God's person. Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders saw His feet (Ex. 24:9-11). Although He refused to show His face, after covering Moses with His hands God revealed His back to him as He passed by (Ex. 33:20-23). God appeared to Daniel in a judgment-scene vision as the Ancient of Days seated on a throne (Dan. 7:9,10). Christ is described as "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) and "the express image of His person" (Heb. 1:3). These passages seem to indicate that God is a personal being and has a personal form. This should come as no surprise, for man was created in the image of God.

Man was created a "little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:7), an indication that he must have been endowed with mental and spiritual gifts. Although Adam lacked experience, insight, and character development, he was made "upright" (Eccl. 7:29), a reference to moral uprightness. Being in the moral image of God, he was righteous, as well as holy (cf. Eph. 4:24), and was part of the Creation God pronounced "very good" (Gen. 1:31).

Since man was created in the moral image of God, he was given the opportunity to demonstrate his love and loyalty to his Creator. Like God, he had the power of choice—the freedom to think and act according to moral imperatives. Thus he was free to love and obey or to distrust and disobey. God risked man's making the wrong choice, because only with the freedom to choose could man develop a character that would fully display the principle of love that is the essence of God Himself (1 John 4:8). His destiny was to reach the highest expression of the image of God: to love God with all his heart, soul, and mind and to love others as himself (Matt. 22:36-40).

Created for Relationships With Others

God said, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18), and He made Eve. Just as the three members of the Godhead are united in a loving relationship, so we were created for the fellowship found in friendship or marriage (Gen. 2:18). In these relationships we have the opportunity to live for others. To be genuinely human is to be relationship oriented. The development of this aspect of the image of God is an integral part of the harmony and prosperity of the kingdom of God.

Created to Be Stewards of the Environment

God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle; over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth" (Gen. 1:26). Here God mentions man's divine image and his dominion over the lower creation in one breath. It was as God's representative that man was placed over the lower created orders. The animal kingdom cannot understand the sovereignty of God, but many animals are capable of loving and serving man.

David, in referring to man's dominion states, "You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet" (Ps. 8:6-8). Man's exalted position was indicative of the glory and honor with which he was crowned (Ps.

8:5). His was the responsibility to rule graciously over the world, imaging or reflecting God's beneficent rule over the universe. So we are not the victim of circumstances, dominated by environmental forces. Rather, God has commissioned us to make a positive contribution by shaping the environment, using each situation in which we are placed as an opportunity to accomplish God's will.

These insights provide the key to improving human relationships in a world in which brokenness abounds. They also hold the answer to the selfish consumption of earth's natural resources and the inconsiderate pollution of air and water that lead to an increasing deterioration of the quality of life. Adoption of the Biblical perspective on human nature provides the only assurance of a prosperous future.

Created to Imitate God

As human beings, we are to act like God because we were made to be like God. Though we are human, and not divine, we are to reflect our Maker within our dominion in every way possible. The fourth commandment appeals to this obligation: we are to follow our Maker's example in working the first six days of the week and resting on the seventh (Ex. 20:8-11).

Created With Conditional Immortality

At Creation, our first parents were given immortality, though their possession of it was conditioned upon obedience. Having access to the tree of life, they were destined to live forever. The only way they could jeopardize their state of immortality was through transgressing the command that forbade them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Disobedience would lead to death (Gen. 2:17; cf. 3:22).

The Fall

Though created perfect and in God's image, and placed in a perfect environment, Adam and Eve became transgressors. How did such a radical-and terrible-transformation come about?

The Origin of Sin

If God created a perfect world, how could sin develop?

1. God and the origin of sin.

Is God the Creator also the author of sin? Scripture points out that by nature God is holy (Isa. 6:3) and there is no unrighteousness in Him. "His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He" (Deut. 32:4). Scripture states, "Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to commit iniquity" (Job 34:10). "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone" (James 1:13); He hates sin (Ps. 5:4; 11:5). God's original Creation was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Far from being the author of sin, He is "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Heb. 5:9).

2. The author of sin.

God could have prevented sin by creating a universe of robots that would do only what they were programmed to do. But God's love demanded that He create beings who

could respond freely to His love-and such a response is possible only from beings who have the power of choice.

Providing His creation with this kind of freedom, however, meant that God must take the risk that some created beings would turn from Him. Unfortunately, Lucifer, a high-ranking being in the angelic world, became proud (Eze. 28:17; cf. 1 Tim. 3:6). Dissatisfied with his position in God's government (cf. Jude 6), he began to covet God's own place (Isa. 14:12-14). In an attempt to take control of the universe, this fallen angel sowed seeds of discontent among his fellow angels, and won the allegiance of many. The resulting heavenly conflict ended when Lucifer, now known as Satan, the adversary, and his angels were expelled from heaven (Rev. 12:4, 7-9).

3. The origin of sin in the human race.

Undeterred by his expulsion from heaven, Satan determined to entice others to join his rebellion against God's government. His attention was drawn to the newly created human race. How could he lead Adam and Eve to rebel? They lived in a perfect world, with all their needs provided for by their Creator. How could they ever become discontented and distrust the One who was the source of their happiness? The account of the first sin gives the answer.

In his assault on the first human beings, Satan decided to catch them off guard. Approaching Eve when she was near the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Satan-in the guise of a serpent-questioned her about God's prohibition against eating of the tree. When Eve affirmed that God had said that they would die by eating of the tree, Satan challenged the divine prohibition, saying, "You will not surely die." He aroused her curiosity by suggesting that God was trying to keep her from a wonderful new experience: that of being like God (Gen. 3:4,5). Immediately, doubt about God's word took root. Eve became infatuated with the grand possibilities the fruit was said to offer. The temptation began to play havoc with her sanctified mind. Belief in God's word now changed to belief in Satan's word. Suddenly she imagined that "the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise." Dissatisfied with her position, Eve yielded to the temptation of becoming like God. "She took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Gen. 3:6).

In trusting her senses rather than God's word, Eve severed her dependence upon God, fell from her high position, and plunged into sin. The fall of the human race, therefore, first and foremost was characterized by a breakdown in faith, in God and His word. This unbelief led to disobedience, which, in turn, resulted in a broken relationship and finally a separation between God and man.

The Impact of Sin

What were the immediate and long-term consequences of sin? How did it affect human nature? And what is the prospect of eliminating sin and improving human nature?

1. The immediate consequences.

The first consequence of sin was a change in human nature that affected interpersonal relationships, as well as the relationship with God. The new exhilarating, eye-opening experience brought Adam and Eve only feelings of shame (Gen. 3:7). Instead of becoming God's equals, as Satan had promised, they became afraid and attempted to hide (Gen. 3:8-10).

When God questioned Adam and Eve about their sin, instead of admitting their fault, they tried to pass the blame along. Adam said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12). His words imply that both Eve and, indirectly, God were responsible for his sin, clearly showing how his sin had broken his relationship with his wife and his Creator. Eve, in turn, blamed the serpent (Gen. 3:13).

The dire consequences that came of it reveal the seriousness of their transgression. God cursed Satan's medium, the serpent, condemning it to move on its belly, as a perpetual reminder of the Fall (Gen. 3:14). To the woman God said, "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). And because Adam listened to his wife instead of to God, the earth was cursed to increase the anxiety and toil of his labors: "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken" (Gen. 3:17-19).

In reaffirming the unchangeableness of His law and that any transgression leads to certain death, God said: "Dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). He executed this verdict by expelling the transgressors from their Edenic home, severing their direct communication with God (Gen. 3:8), and preventing them from partaking of the tree of life, the source of eternal life. Thus Adam and Eve became subject to death (Gen. 3:22).

2. The character of sin.

Many scriptural passages, including particularly the account of the Fall, make it clear that sin is a moral evil—the result of a free moral agent's choosing to violate the revealed will of God (Gen 3:1-6; Rom. 1:18-22).

a. The definition of sin.

Biblical definitions of sin include: "the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV), a failure to act by anyone "who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it" (James 4:17, NIV), and "whatever is not from faith" (Rom. 14:23). One broad inclusive definition of sin is: "Any deviation from the known will of God, either of neglect to do what He has specifically commanded or of doing what He has specifically forbidden."

Sin knows no neutrality. Christ states, "He who is not with Me is against Me" (Matt. 12:30). Failure to believe in Him is sin (John 16:9). Sin is absolute in its character because it is rebellion against God and His will. Any sin, small or great, results in the verdict "guilty." Thus "whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumbles in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

b. Sin involves thoughts, as well as actions.

Frequently sin is spoken of only in terms of concrete and visible acts of lawbreaking. But Christ said that being angry with someone violates the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, "You shall not kill" (Ex. 20:13, RSV), and that lustful desires transgress the command "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). Sin, therefore, involves not only overt disobedience in actions but also thoughts and desires.

c. Sin and guilt.

Sin produces guilt. From the Biblical perspective, guilt implies that the one who has committed sin is liable to punishment. And because all are sinners, the whole world is "guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19).

If not cared for properly, guilt devastates the physical, mental, and spiritual faculties. And ultimately, if not resolved, it produces death-for "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

The antidote for guilt is forgiveness (Matt. 6:12), which results in a clear conscience and peace of mind. This forgiveness God is eager to grant repentant sinners. To the sin-burdened, guilt-ridden race, Christ graciously calls, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

d. The control center of sin.

The seat of sin is in what the Bible calls the heart-what we know as the mind. From the heart "spring the issues of life" (Prov.4:23). Christ reveals that it is the person's thoughts that defile, "for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt. 15:19). It is by the heart that the entire person-the intellect, will, affections, emotions, and body-is influenced. Because the heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9), human nature can be described as corrupt, depraved, and thoroughly sinful.

3. Sin's effect on humanity.

Some may feel that the sentence of death was too severe a penalty for eating the forbidden fruit. But we can only gauge the seriousness of the transgression in the light of the effect of Adam's sin on the human race.

Adam and Eve's first son committed murder. Their descendants soon violated the sacred marriage union by engaging in polygamy, and it was not long before wickedness and violence filled the earth (Gen. 4:8, 23; 6:1-5, 11-13). God's appeals for repentance and reformation went unheeded, and only eight persons were saved from the Flood waters that destroyed the unrepentant. The history of the race after the Flood is, with few exceptions, a sad account of the outworkings of the sinfulness of human nature.

a. The universal sinfulness of humanity.

History reveals that Adam's descendants share the sinfulness of his nature. In prayer, David said, "In Your sight no one living is righteous" (Ps. 143:2; cf. 14:3). "There is no one who does not sin" (1 Kings 8:46). And Solomon said, "Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin'?" (Prov. 20:9); "There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin" (Eccl. 7:20). The New Testament is equally clear, stating that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23) and that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

b. Is sinfulness inherited or acquired?

Paul said, "In Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22). In another place he noted, "Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

The human heart's corruption affects the total person. In this light Job exclaims, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!" (Job. 14:4). David said, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5). And Paul stated that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7,8). Before conversion, he pointed out, believers were "by nature children of wrath," just like the rest of humanity (Eph. 2:3).

Although as children we acquire sinful behavior through imitation, the above texts affirm that we inherit our basic sinfulness. The universal sinfulness of humanity is evidence that by nature we tend toward evil, not good.

c. The eradication of sinful behavior.

How successful are people in removing sin from their lives and from society?

Every effort to achieve a righteous life through one's own strength is doomed. Christ said that everyone who has sinned is "a slave of sin." Only divine power can emancipate us from this slavery. But Christ has assured us, "If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). You can only produce righteousness, He said, if "you abide in Me" because "without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4,5).

Even the apostle Paul failed to live a righteous life on his own. He knew the perfect standard of God's law but he was not able to achieve it. Recounting his efforts, he said, "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate." "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." Then he pointed to the impact of sin in his life: "Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me." In spite of his failures he admired God's perfect standard, saying, "I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:15,19,20,22-24, RSV).

Paul finally acknowledged that he needed divine power to be victorious. Through Christ he put aside a life according to the flesh and began a new life according to the Spirit (Rom. 7:25; 8:1).

This new life in the Spirit is the transforming gift of God. Through divine grace, we who are "dead in trespasses and sins" become victorious (Eph. 2:1,3,8-10). The spiritual rebirth so transforms the life (John 1:13; John 3:5) that we can speak of a new creation—the "old things have passed away" and "all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). The new life, however, does not exclude the possibility of sinning (1 John 2:1).

4. Evolution and man's fall.

Ever since Creation Satan has confused many by weakening confidence in the scriptural accounts of the origins of the human race and man's Fall. One could call evolution the "natural" view of humanity, a view based on the assumption that life began by chance and that humans, through a long evolutionary process, have emerged from the lower forms of life. Through a process of survival of the fittest, they evolved to their present status. Not yet having reached their potential, they are still evolving.

A growing number of Christians have adopted theistic evolution, which claims that God used evolution in bringing about the Genesis Creation. Those accepting theistic evolution do not view the first chapters of Genesis as literal, but as allegory or myth.

a. The Biblical view of man and evolution.

Creationist Christians are concerned about the impact of the evolutionary theory on the Christian faith. James Orr wrote: "Christianity is met today, not by piecemeal attacks upon its doctrines...but by a positively-conceived counter-view of the world, claiming to rest on scientific grounds, ably constructed and defended, yet in its fundamental ideas striking at the roots of the Christian system."

The Bible rejects the allegorical or mythical interpretation of Genesis. The Bible writers themselves interpret Genesis 1-11 as literal history. Adam, Eve, the serpent, and Satan are all seen as historical characters in the drama of the great controversy (see Job 31:33; Ecc. 7:29; Matt. 19:4,5; John 8:44; Rom. 5:12,18,19; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14; Rev. 12:9).

b. Calvary and evolution.

Evolution in whatever form or shape contradicts the basic foundations of Christianity. As Leonard Verduin asserted, "In the place of the story of a 'Fall' has come the story of an ascent." Christianity and evolution are diametrically opposed. Either our first parents were created in the image of God and experienced a fall into sin or they did not. If they did not, then why be Christian?

Calvary most radically questions evolution. If there has been no fall, why would we need Christ to die in our behalf? Not just death in general, but Christ's death for us proclaims that humanity is not "OK." Left to ourselves we would continue to deteriorate until the human race is annihilated.

Our hope rests upon the Man who hung from the cross. His death alone opens up the possibility of a better, fuller life that will never end. Calvary declares that we need a substitute to liberate us.

c. The incarnation and evolution.

Perhaps the Creation-versus-evolution question is best answered by viewing the creation of humanity from the perspective of the incarnation. In bringing the second Adam, Christ, into history, God was creatively at work. If God could bring about this supreme miracle, there is no question as to His ability to form the first Adam.

d. Has man come of age?

Frequently evolutionists have pointed to the enormous scientific advances in the last few centuries as evidence that man seems to be the arbiter of his own destiny. With science supplying his needs, given enough time, he will solve all the world's problems.

Yet technology's messianic role is meeting increasing skepticism-because technology has thrust the planet to the brink of annihilation. Humanity has utterly failed to subdue

and control the sinful heart. Consequently, all the scientific progress has only made the world more dangerous.

Increasingly, philosophies of nihilism and despair appear valid. Alexander Pope's dictum, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast," rings hollow today. Job has a better grasp of reality-time trudges on "day after hopeless day" (Job 7:6, LB). Man's world is running down. Someone had to come from beyond human history, invade it, and bring a new reality into it.

Rays of Hope

How great was the depravity of humanity? At the cross humans murdered their Creator—the ultimate parricide! But God has not left mankind without hope.

David contemplated humanity's position in Creation. At first impressed with the vastness of the universe, he thought man insignificant. Then he became aware of humanity's true position. Speaking of man's present relation with God, he said, "You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands" (Ps. 8:5,6,; cf. Heb. 2:7).

In spite of the Fall, there remains a sense of human dignity. Although marred, the divine likeness was not completely obliterated. Though fallen, corrupt, sinful, man is still God's representative on earth. His nature is less than divine, yet he holds a dignified position as God's caretaker of earthly creation. When David realized this he responded with praise and thanksgiving, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth" (Ps. 8:9).

The Covenant of Grace

Through transgression the first pair had become sinful. No longer able to resist Satan, could they ever be free, or were they left to perish? Was there any hope?

The Covenant Given at the Fall

Before God pronounced the punishment on the fallen pair's sins He gave them hope by introducing the covenant of grace. He said, "I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Gen. 3:15).

God's message brought encouragement because it announced that though Satan had brought humanity under his evil spell, ultimately he would be defeated. The covenant was made between God and humanity. First God promised through His grace a bulwark against sin. He would create a hatred between the serpent and the woman; between Satan's followers and God's people. This would disrupt man's relationship with Satan and open the way for a renewed relationship with God.

Through the centuries war was to continue between God's church and Satan. The conflict would reach its culmination in the death of Jesus Christ, who was the prophesied personification of the Seed of the woman. At Calvary, Satan was defeated. Bruised though the Seed of the woman was, the author of evil was defeated.

All who accept God's offer of grace will know an enmity against sin that will make them successful in the battle with Satan. Through faith they will share in the Saviour's victory at Calvary.

The Covenant Established Before Creation

The covenant of grace was not developed after the Fall. The Scriptures bring out that even before Creation the members of the Godhead had covenanted among Themselves to rescue the race if it should fall into sin. Paul said God "chose us in Him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise and glory of His grace" (Eph. 1:4-6; cf. 2 Tim. 1:9). Speaking about Christ's atoning sacrifice, Peter said, "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20).

The covenant was based on an unshakable foundation: the promise and oath of God Himself (Heb. 6:18). Jesus Christ was the surety of the covenant (Heb. 7:22). A surety is someone who assumes any debt or obligation in the event of a default of another person. Christ's serving as the surety meant that if the human race would fall into sin He would bear their punishment. He would pay the price of their redemption; He would make the atonement for their sin; He would meet the demands of God's violated law. No human being or angel could assume that responsibility. Only Christ the Creator, the representative head of the race, could take that responsibility (Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:22).

The Son of God is not only the surety of the covenant, He is also its mediator or executor. His description of His mission as incarnate Son of man reveals this aspect of His role. He said, "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38; cf. 5:30, 43). The will of the Father is "that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life" (John 6:40). "And this is eternal life," He said, "that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3). At the end of His mission He testified about His execution of the Father's commission, saying, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

At the cross Jesus fulfilled His pledge to be humanity's surety in the covenant. His cry "It is finished!" (John 19:30), marked the completion of His mission. With His own life He had paid the penalty God's violated law required, guaranteeing the salvation of the repentant human race. At that moment Christ's blood ratified the covenant of grace. Through faith in His atoning blood, repentant sinners would be adopted as sons and daughters of God, thus becoming heirs of eternal life.

This covenant of grace demonstrates God's infinite love for humanity. Established before Creation, the covenant was revealed after the Fall. At that time, in a special sense, God and humanity became partners.

The Covenant Renewal

Unfortunately mankind rejected this magnificent covenant of grace both before the Flood and after it (Gen. 6:1-8; 11:1-9). When God offered the covenant again, He did so through Abraham. Again He affirmed the promise of redemption: "In your Seed all the

nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Gen. 22:18; cf. 12:3; 18:18).

The Scriptures particularly highlight Abraham's faithfulness to the covenant conditions. Abraham believed God and He "accounted it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). That Abraham's participation in the covenant blessings, while grounded in the grace of God, was also contingent upon his obedience reveals that the covenant upholds the authority of God's law (Gen. 17:1; 26:5).

Abraham's faith was of such quality that he was given the title "the father of all those who believe" (Rom. 4:11). He is God's model of the righteousness by faith that reveals itself in obedience (Rom. 4:2,3; James 2:23,24). The covenant of grace does not automatically bestow its blessings on Abraham's natural descendants, but only on such as follow Abraham's example of faith. "Only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham" (Gal. 3:7). Every individual on earth can experience the covenant promises of salvation by meeting the condition: "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29). From the Godward side the Sinaitic covenant (also called the first covenant) was a renewal of the Abrahamic covenant of grace (Heb. 9:1). But Israel perverted it into a covenant of works (Gal. 4:22-31).

The New Covenant

Later scriptural passages speak of "a new or better covenant." But they do so, not because the everlasting covenant was changed but because **(1)** through Israel's unfaithfulness God's everlasting covenant had been perverted into a system of works; **(2)** it was associated with a new revelation of God's love in Jesus Christ's incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and mediation (cf. Heb. 8:6-13); and **(3)** it was not until the cross that it was ratified by the blood of Christ (Dan. 9:27; Luke 22:20; Rom. 15:8; Heb. 9:11-22).

What this covenant offers those who accept it is enormous. Through God's grace it offers them the forgiveness of their sins. It offers the Holy Spirit's work of writing the Ten Commandments on the heart, and restoring repentant sinners into the image of their Maker (Jer. 31:33). The new-covenant, new-birth, experience brings the righteousness of Christ and the experience of justification by faith.

The renewal of the heart it affords transforms individuals so that they will bring forth the fruits of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22,23). Through the power of Christ's saving grace they may walk as Christ walked, daily enjoying the things that please God (John 8:29). Fallen humanity's only hope is to accept God's invitation to enter into His covenant of grace. Through faith in Jesus Christ we can experience this relationship that assures our adoption as children of God and heirs with Christ to His kingdom.