

# The Essential Nature of Man (Part 1)

Rocky Wyatt | January 7, 2018

# The Nature of Man – Three Views

## Monism

The body and the soul are of the same substance.



# The Nature of Man – Three Views

## Trichotomy

Man is composed of body, soul, and spirit.



# The Nature of Man – Three Views

## Dichotomy

Man is composed of two distinct parts: body and soul.



# Monism

Monism insists that humans are not to be thought of as in any sense composed of parts or separate entities, but rather as a radical unity. In the monistic understanding, the Bible does not view a human as body, soul, and spirit, but simply as a self. The terms sometimes used to distinguish parts of a human are actually to be taken as basically synonymous. A human is never treated in the Bible as a dualistic being.



Erickson

# Monism

According to monism, to be human is to be or have a body. The idea that a human can somehow exist apart from a body is unthinkable. Consequently, there is no possibility of postdeath existence in a disembodied state. Immortality of the soul is quite untenable. Not only, then, is there no possibility of a future life apart from bodily resurrection, but any sort of intermediate state between death and resurrection is ruled out as well.



Erickson

# Monism – A Biblical Response

This view has not generally been adopted by evangelical theologians because so many scriptural texts seem clearly to affirm that our souls or spirits live on after our bodies die.

Grudem



# Monism – A Biblical Response

## Genesis 35:18

It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

## Psalms 31:5

Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O LORD, God of truth.



# Monism – A Biblical Response

Luke 23:43

And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

Luke 23:46

And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.”  
Having said this, He breathed His last.



# Monism – A Biblical Response

Acts 7:59

They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”

2 Corinthians 5:8

...we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.



# Monism– A Biblical Response

## Philippians 1:23–24

But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.



# Trichotomy

Belief in the tripartite nature of man as spirit, soul, and body, thus making a distinction between *spirit* and *soul*.

Cairns, A. (2002). In *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (p. 494). Belfast; Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International.



# Trichotomy

Trichotomists say that the body is our material existence, soul is our intellect, will, and emotions, and spirit is our God-consciousness. On the trichotomist view, the spirit is dead or dormant in the sinner.

Frame, J. M. (2013). *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (p. 801). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.



# Trichotomy – A Biblical Justification

## 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## 1 Corinthians 15:44

...it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.



# Trichotomy – A Biblical Justification

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.



# Trichotomy – A Biblical Response

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

...not a scientific enumeration of the constituent parts of human nature, but a comprehensive sketch of that nature in its chief relations; compare Mark 12:30—“thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength”—where none would think of finding proof of a fourfold division of human nature.



Strong

# Trichotomy – A Biblical Response

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Here the trichotomist insists, since the soul can be “divided” from the spirit, is evidence that they are two separate and distinct ontological entities. But this is to ignore the fact that “soul” and “spirit” are both genitives governed by the participle “dividing.” The verse is saying that the Word of God “divides” the soul, *even* the spirit...



## Trichotomy – A Biblical Response

But it does not say that the Word of God divides *between* soul and spirit ... or divides the soul *from* the spirit. The verse no more intends this than it intends, when it goes on to say that the Word is the judge of *thoughts* and of *intents* of the heart (again, two genitives governed by the noun “judge”), that thoughts and intents are ontologically distinct things.



# Trichotomy – A Biblical Response

Clearly, intents are simply one kind of thought. What the verse is actually saying is that the Word of God is able to penetrate into the deepest recesses of a man's spirit and judge his very thoughts, even the secret intentions of his heart.



Reymond

# Trichotomy – A Biblical Response

1 Corinthians 15:44

...it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.  
If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

Here the trichotomist urges that to assert that there is no difference between “soul” and “spirit” is to assert that there is no distinction between the preresurrection body and the resurrection body.



## Trichotomy – A Biblical Response

But precisely because it is evident that there is a difference between these two bodies, he continues, it is equally clear that there is an ontological distinction between soul and spirit. I would note, however, that the implied subject of both verbs (“sown,” “raised”) is the *same* subject, the body, and that the same word σῶμα, *sōma*, is used in both instances, suggesting that it is the *same* body numerically that is sown and raised...



# Trichotomy – A Biblical Response

If the two words really intended totally distinct ontological entities, then the body that is raised is not the same body that is sown. Paul doubtless intended simply to say that the “soulish body,” that is, the body whose attributes fit it for life in this *natural* world during this age, will be so transformed that, as the “spiritual body,” it will fit the life which the person who is associated with the risen Christ will live in the *supernatural* New Earth situation.

Reymond



# Trichotomy – Related False Teaching

(a) That of the Gnostics, who held that the πνεῦμα (spirit) is part of the divine essence, and therefore incapable of sin.

(b) That of the Apollinarians, who taught that Christ's humanity embraced only σῶμα (body) and ψυχή (soul), while his divine nature furnished the πνεῦμα (spirit).

(c) That of the Semi-Pelagians, who excepted the human πνεῦμα (spirit) from the dominion of original sin.



# Trichotomy – Related False Teaching

(d) That of Placeus, who held that only the πνεῦμα (spirit) was directly created by God...

(e) That of Julius Müller, who held that the ψυχή (soul) comes to us from Adam, but that our πνεῦμα (spirit) was corrupted in a previous state of being.



# Trichotomy – Related False Teaching

(f) That of the Annihilationists, who hold that man at his creation had a divine element breathed into him, which he lost by sin, and which he recovers only in regeneration; so that only when he has this πνεῦμα (spirit) restored by virtue of his union with Christ does man become immortal, death being to the sinner a complete extinction of being.

Strong



# Trichotomy and Counseling

The body is to be treated by the physician,  
the spirit by the pastor, and the soul by the  
psychologist.

Clyde Narramore



# Trichotomy and Counseling

CBC Distinctive:

## **The Sufficiency of Scripture**

We believe that God has provided us in the Scripture with everything necessary to nurture and sustain spiritual life. That means we are committed to teaching and to counseling directly and exclusively from the Word of God. We do not believe that secular psychology has any legitimate role in the sanctification of the believer.



# Trichotomy and Counseling

## **The Sufficiency of Scripture**

2 Peter 1:3

Seeing that His Divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.



# Dichotomy

Probably the most widely held view throughout most of the history of Christian thought has been the view that the human is composed of two elements, a material aspect (the body) and an immaterial component (the soul or spirit)...



# Dichotomy

Dichotomism was commonly held from the earliest period of Christian thought. Following the Council of Constantinople in 381, however, it grew in popularity to the point where it was virtually the universal belief of the church.

Erickson



# Dichotomy

Man has a two-fold nature,—on the one hand material, on the other hand immaterial. He consists of body, and of spirit, or soul. That there are two, and only two, elements in man's being, is a fact to which consciousness testifies. This testimony is confirmed by Scripture, in which the prevailing representation of man's constitution is that of dichotomy.

Strong



# Dichotomy - The Record of Man's Creation

## Genesis 2:7

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (soul).

## Ecclesiastes 12:7

...then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.



Dichotomy - The interchangeable use of the terms “soul” and “spirit.”

Genesis 41:8

Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

Psalms 42:6

O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.



Dichotomy - The interchangeable use of the terms “soul” and “spirit.”

John 12:27

“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

John 13:21

When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.”



Dichotomy - The interchangeable use of the terms “soul” and “spirit.”

Matthew 20:28

...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life (soul) a ransom for many.”

Matthew 27:50

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.



Dichotomy - The mention of body and soul (or spirit) as together constituting the whole man.

Matthew 10:28

“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

1 Corinthians 5:3

For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present.



Dichotomy - The mention of body and soul (or spirit) as together constituting the whole man.

3 John 2

Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.



Dichotomy - The words “soul” and “spirit” are used to designate the immaterial element of the dead.

1 Peter 3:19

...in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison...

Hebrews 12:23

...to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect...



Dichotomy - The words “soul” and “spirit” are used to designate the immaterial element of the dead.

## Revelation 6:9

When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained...



Dichotomy - The words “soul” and “spirit” are used to designate the immaterial element of the dead.

## Revelation 20:4

Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.



# Dichotomy – Parallel Uses of Soul and Spirit

Job 7:11

“Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

Isaiah 26:9

At night my soul longs for You, Indeed, my spirit within me seeks You diligently; For when the earth experiences Your judgments The inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.



# Dichotomy – Parallel Uses of Soul and Spirit

Luke 1:46–47

And Mary said: “My soul exalts the Lord, And  
my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.



## Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

Those who advocate trichotomy face a difficult problem defining clearly just what the difference is between the soul and the spirit (from their perspective)...



## Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

If Scripture gave clear support to the idea that our spirit is the part of us that directly relates to God in worship and prayer, while our soul includes our intellect (thinking), our emotions (feeling), and our will (deciding), then trichotomists would have a strong case. However, Scripture appears not to allow such a distinction to be made.



Grudem

# Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

The “spirit” and emotions.

Acts 17:16

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.

John 13:21

When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.”



# Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

The “spirit” and emotions.

Proverbs 17:22

A joyful heart is good medicine, But a broken spirit dries up the bones.



# Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

The “spirit” and thinking.

Mark 2:8

Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts?”

Romans 8:16

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God...



# Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

The “spirit” and thinking.

1 Corinthians 2:11

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.



# Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

Our “souls” and worship.

Psalm 25:1

To You, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

Psalm 62:1

My soul waits in silence for God only; From Him is my salvation.



# Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

Our “souls” and worship.

Psalm 103:1

Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name.



# Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

God commands us to love him with all our souls.

Mark 12:30

<sup>30</sup> AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.'



# Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

There are sins of the spirit as well as the flesh.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.



# Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

Fleshly lusts war against the soul.

1 Peter 2:11

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.



# Dichotomy – A Biblical Defense

Soul is used of God.

Isaiah 42:1

“Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.

Hebrews 10:38

BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.



## Is There a Better Designation Than Dichotomism?

Since Scripture presents a person as a unified yet complex self, the designation “complex unity” is preferred.<sup>17</sup> The material (body) and immaterial (soul/spirit) function together in one person, embracing both unity and diversity...



## Is There a Better Designation Than Dichotomism?

This complex unity is conditional, since death in a fallen world separates body and spirit (James 2:26). Yet this separation is temporary, since all people are headed for resurrection, a reunion of body and spirit in eternal forms.



<sup>17</sup> See Beck and Demarest, *The Human Person*, 137.

MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (p. 424). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

# Other Elements of the Human Constitution

## Heart

The Bible says much about the heart—not the physical organ but the control center of a person and the seat for thoughts, attitudes, motivations, and actions.

MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (p. 419). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.



# Other Elements of the Human Constitution

## Heart

### Genesis 6:5

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

### Proverbs 4:23

Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.



# Other Elements of the Human Constitution

## Heart

Matthew 18:35

“My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

Romans 6:17

But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,



# Other Elements of the Human Constitution

## Heart

Ezekiel 36:26

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Matthew 5:8

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.



# Other Elements of the Human Constitution

## Heart

2 Timothy 2:22

Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

Hebrews 10:22

...let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.



# Other Elements of the Human Constitution

## Conscience

God has created everyone with a conscience, the faculty of moral evaluation concerning right and wrong, good and evil. Connected with self-awareness and rational capacity, the conscience alerts a person concerning the morality of his or her actions...



# Other Elements of the Human Constitution

## Conscience

The conscience functions like a divine moral referee. Failure to heed the conscience often leads to guilt and shame.



MacArthur, J., & Mayhue, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (p. 420). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

# Other Elements of the Human Constitution

## Conscience

Romans 2:14–15

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...



# Other Elements of the Human Constitution

## Conscience

Romans 9:1

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit,



# Other Elements of the Human Constitution

## Conscience

Titus 1:15

To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.

1 Timothy 4:2

...by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron...



# The Nature of Man – God's Command

Matthew 22:36–37

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “ ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ ”

