THEORIES CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF MAN

The study of the doctrine of man has also been called Anthropology. This word comes from two Greek words; "anthropos" meaning "man" and "logos" meaning "word, or discourse". One of the chief areas of concern is the inevitable question of the origin of man. Mankind wants to know where he came from and where he is going. Three theories concerning man's origin will be treated briefly here.

A. Atheistic Evolution

The Atheistic Evolutionist holds the theory of spontaneous generation; that all forms of animal life evolved from more primitive forms of life. The evolutionary theory holds roughly that cell matter evolved into life forms, and then to fish, birds, animals, apes and finally man. It remains a theory, not a proven fact, because the "missing links" in the transitional stages have never been found. The evolutionary theory is built on supposition, and literature with an honest representation of it abounds in use of terms like “maybe, we suggest, perhaps, it could be, we assume, it is possible, it is feasible, and it may be presupposed". Atheistic Evolution is based on the survival of the fittest, but it cannot account for the arrival of the first. It fails to adequately account for the origin of matter and life because it rejects God the originator of matter and the source of all life.

B. Theistic Evolution

This theory holds that higher forms of life evolved from lower forms, but the lower forms were created by God. This is partly the truth in that God is acknowledged as the creator of part of creation. However, it is also partly false in that the Bible teaches the creation of the species, not their evolution. All fish, birds, animals and man were created in their order to reproduce "after their kind", not to evolve to some higher form. A reptile can only produce a reptile, a horse can only produce a horse, and a monkey can only produce a monkey, never a man.

C. Theistic Creation

Theistic Creation holds to the Scriptural fact that God is the life source, the originator and maintainer of all forms of life, and the one who created all to reproduce "after their kind". God created the heavens and the earth, the universe of worlds and galaxies (Genesis 1:1). God created the archangels and the angelic hosts (Colossians 1:16-17; Revelation 4:11). God created the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field and every living creature (Genesis 1:21-25; John 1:1-3). The final creative act of God was man, the highest creation of God on this earth (Genesis 1:26-31).
The original man was the direct result of a creative act of God. Man is a divinely created being, the crowning glory and masterpiece of God's creation. The unity of the human race points to the creative act of God of the original pair, man and woman (Acts 17:26; Romans 5:12, 19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; Hebrews 2:16). All nations are of one blood for all were "in Adam" when he was created. The only true answer to the questions concerning the origin of man is God's answer found in the Bible. Man is a created being.

What is man?

The Psalmist in beholding the glory of the heavens asked the question, "What is man...?" (Psalm 8:4 with Job 7:17-18; Psalm 144:3; Hebrews 2:6). The following outline answers this vital question.

A. Man is a Created Being

(Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7; Job 33:4 Revelation 4:11 Psalm 139:14-16; 104:30; 1 Corinthians 11:9; Isaiah 45:12) God said, "Let us MAKE MAN in our image, after our likeness..." (Genesis 1:26-27). There are two words used in the Genesis account of creation that are worthy of consideration. These words are "created" and "made" (Genesis 1:26; 2:1-3). The word "create" means to make something out of nothing, to bring into existence. The word "make" means to fashion and form as a potter forms a vessel of clay. God created man as to his spirit and soul (Zechariah 12:1) but God made man as to his body (Genesis 2:7). Man is a created being. He owes his existence to God, the creator and sustainer of all things.

B. Man is a Dependent Being

The fact man owes his existence to a creator, makes him a dependent creature. He is not self-existent and thus cannot be independent. Whether realising it or not, he is totally dependent on God for his very breath. It is in God that "we live, and move and have our being." (Acts 17:23-31).

C. Man is an Intelligent Being

Man is a being having reason, intelligence, imagination, and the ability to express his thoughts in language. This is far superior to the animal creation because they are simply creatures of habit and instinct. (Genesis 2:15; 1:26-28; 2:19-20; Isaiah 1:18; Matthew 16:7; Genesis 11:6; 8:21; Job 35:11; Romans 1:21).

D. Man is a Moral being
God created man with a freewill, the ability to choose. It is this which makes man a moral and therefore responsible creature. Just as God created the angelic hosts as beings with free will, having the power of choice, so God created man with the power of choice. Man was not created as a robot, a machine, or a will-less creature. God desired a creature that would respond to Him willingly and freely. This necessitated man having a free will.

Some deny the fact of man's free will, but the Scriptures support it by often appealing to man's will to respond to God's will. It will be admitted that man's will is weakened because of sin, but nevertheless it is still existent. Though man's will is subject to his corrupt nature and evil heart, he can still respond to the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is not to say that man can save himself. God must do that but man can respond to God's call. These Scriptures illustrate how God appeals to man's will – John 7:17; Hebrews 3:7, 8, 15; 4:7; John 1:12, 13.

God placed within man a conscience which gives him a moral sense, distinguishing right from wrong. Conscience means “a knowledge of self in relation to a known law of right and wrong” It is a faculty that know animal has. Though man was created in a state of innocence, purity and uprightness, he was ignorant of evil. In his upright state, his conscience was inactive until he sinned. The moment he sinned, his conscience began to work, and his thoughts began to accuse and excuse him.

A.H. Strong, in “Systematic Theology” says concerning man’s moral powers, “These powers are intellect, sensibility, and will together with that peculiar power of discrimination and impulsion, which we call conscience”. The intellect enables man to discern between what is right and wrong; sensibility appeals to him to do one or the other; and will decides the issue. Conscience involves them all. It applies God’s moral law to man.

A.A. Hodge in “Outlines of Theology” states “Conscience, like every other faculty of the soul, is undeveloped in the infant, and very imperfectly developed in the savage; and more over, after a long habit of inattention to its voice and violation of its law, the individual sinner is often judicially given up to carnal indifference; his conscience for a time lying latent. Yet it is certain that it is never destroyed”. Conscience is indestructible, and it is this which constitutes man's torment as “the worm that never dieth” in Gehenna in eternity (Mark 9:46-48; Isaiah 66:24).

Conscience however, is fallible, for since man's knowledge has been perverted through sin, it does not form a perfectly sound basis of judgment. Conscience is not a perfect moral standard.

H. Thiessen in “Lectures in Systematic Theology” says “The only true standard for conscience is the Word of God as interpreted by the Holy Spirit” (John 8:9; Acts 24:16; Hebrews 9:14; Romans 2:15; 1 Corinthians 8:7; Titus 1:15; 1 Timothy 4:2). The Holy Spirit has to bring the conscience in
line with the infallible Word (Romans 9:1).

E. Man is a Love Being

In this fact, we come to very purpose and reason for the creation of man. God is love and love must not only have an object but must have that which can reciprocate that love (1 John 4:16-19). The created universe with all its glories cannot respond to the love of God. The brute creation cannot enjoy or reciprocate God’s love. If God, who is love, desires a creation upon which He can bestow His love, then it must be able to respond and reciprocate the same. Such a creature would be unresponsive, un-affectionate and will-less, affording God no pleasure at all.

The answer to the heart cry of God was the creation of man. Man is a being with will and intelligence; capable of choosing to love. He was created by love, for love and to reciprocate love. Without such love, man’s heart remains empty and void.

F. Man is a Triune Being

There are two basic theories concerning man’s being.

1. The Dichotomous Theory

This holds that man is a dual or bi-partite being, consisting of spirit/soul (two terms which are synonymous) and body.

2. The Trichotomous Theory

The theory holds that man is a tripartite being spirit, soul and body. Spirit and soul are distinguishable but indivisible, and these are housed in a physical body. This seems to be more consistent with the whole of Scripture.

God is triune in His being, and so man, created in the image and likeness of God, was created a triune being, consisting of spirit, soul and body (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12; Genesis 2:7; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 3:4). These are the three parts of consciousness within the total personality of man.

There are three different words both in the Hebrew and Greek pertaining to man’s tripartite being.

In Hebrew:

- Ruach which means - Spirit
- Nephesh which means - Soul
- Beten or Geshem which means - Body
In Greek

- Pneuma which means - Spirit
- Psueche which means - Soul
- Soma which means - Body

Let us consider the tri-unity of man, which speaks of three parts of consciousness within man’s being.

A. Spirit: The God conscious part of man, capable of knowing God. When God created man, He formed the spirit of man within him (Zechariah 12:1). So, God is the God of all spirits (Numbers 16:22; 27:16; Hebrews 12:9). The spirit is the eternal part of man that is able to worship God who is Spirit (John 4:24). It is referred to as the candle of the Lord (Proverbs 20:27; Job 32:8; Ecclesiastes 12:7; 3:19-21; 1 Corinthians 2:1). The faculties of the spirit are intuition, conscience and communion.

When man fell, his spirit lost its contact with God. This can only be restored through regeneration. In the new birth, it is man’s spirit that is born again, or renewed. “That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit (John 3:6 with Romans 8:16; Titus 3:5; Ezekiel 11:19-20; 36:25-27; John 3:1-6; 20:22; Colossians 3:10; Ezekiel 18:31; Psalm 51:10; Malachi 2:16). The believer’s spirit, when joined to the Lord, becomes one with the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17).

B. Soul: The self-conscious part of man, capable of knowing one’s self. Moses, in the account of creation tells how God formed man’s body out of the dust of the earth, and then breathed into man “the breath of life”, or more literally, “the breath of lives” (Genesis 2:7).

Man received his spirit and soul as God breathed into his body formed of the earth. The breath of lives included both spirit life and soul life. The first man then became a living soul (1 Corinthians 15:45-47; Ezekiel 18:4; Matthew 10:28; Leviticus 17:11; Revelation 6:9, 10). The soul is the central or mediatorial part of man connecting the spirit and the body together in tri-unity. It can influence spirit and body because of its centrality. There are basically three theories as to the origin of the soul.

The Theory of Pre-existence: This theory states that all souls have previously existed and then enter the human body at some point after conception. However, this theory has absolutely no foundation in Scripture.

The Theory of Creation: This theory holds that every soul is created by God sometime after conception. It teaches that the person only receives their body from their parents, but the soul from God. However, Bible revelation and human experience shows that the sinful nature of Adam and character traits and likenesses of the parents are seen in every child born.

The Theory of the Traducianists: This theory holds that the human race was created “in Adam” as pertaining to the soul and body and that both is the result of natural reproduction. This theory
seems to be most consistent with the Word of God.

The Bible is clear that the whole human race was representative “in Adam” and that when he sinned and fell; the whole human race fell with him. Both Scripture and human experience shows the sinful nature and character traits of parents to be in their offspring. Adam, the first soul came into being as a result of God’s creative power. All souls since have come into existence by the co-operation of Creator and parents. God is the “Father of spirits” (Hebrews 12:9), and the soul and body come from the parents according to the laws of human reproduction. It is this that seems to balance out the views concerning Creationism and Traducianism.

Creationism holds the view that the soul is transmitted from the parents, as seen in traits, characteristics of the parents in the child. God does not create sinless souls every time a child is born, nor is the soul pre-existent, but God gives the spirit and the child receives soul and body from the original parents via the law of human reproduction. This would account for the sinful nature, and character traits from the parents (Job 14:14; 15:4; Psalm 51:5; 58:3; John 3:6; Ephesians 3:2; Psalm 139:13-16; Job 10:8-12; Ecclesiastes 11:5).

We will consider how the word “soul” is used in Scripture and then consider its various associations.

1. It is used of Persons in General

There is a general use of the word “soul” with reference to persons. When we say, “there are 70 souls present”, we mean that there are seventy persons present. Following are some Scriptures which illustrate this point (Genesis 12:5; 46:15, 18 22-27; Exodus 1:5; Joshua 10:28-39; Acts 2:41-43; 7:14; 1 Peter 3:20; Revelation 20:4; Ezekiel 22:25-27). So, when God breathed into man the breath of life, man became a living soul - that is a living person (Genesis 2:7).

2. It is sometimes used interchangeably for Spirit

Sometimes the words “soul” and “spirit” are used interchangeably or synonymously. It is for this reason that some expositors hold the dual being of man, or follow the Dichotomous theory. In the bodily resurrection of the child under Elijah’s ministry, the Scripture says that the child’s soul came again (1 Kings 17:17-23). In the bodily resurrection of the child under Christ’s ministry, the Scriptures say that “her spirit came again” (Luke 8:49-56). Hebrews speaks of the dead believers as being “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:23). Revelation speaks of “the souls under the altar” in heaven appealing to God for vengeance (Revelation 6:9-11). When it is understood that the spirit and soul is distinguishable but indivisible then the interchangeable or synonymous use of both does not produce any conflict. The Scriptures given illustrate this statement. In bodily resurrection, the child’s soul could not come again without the spirit, nor spirit without soul. The spirits in heaven are souls and souls are redeemed spirits.

3. It is used to Denote Soul- Faculties

The faculties of the soul are basically three; mind, will and emotions. It is for this reason that the
word is used of the following:

**God has Soul:** Though God is a Spirit, yet He is spoken of as having soul and His soul is grieved over man, Spirit and soul are associated with God; distinguishable but indivisible (Leviticus 26:11; Joshua 10:16; Isaiah 1:14; Hebrews 10:38).

**Christ has Soul:** Several times Scriptures speak of the Soul of Christ (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27-31; Isaiah 53:11-12; John 12:27; Matthew 26:38). As perfect and complete Man, He has spirit, soul and body. Christ’s mind, will and emotions were absolutely one with God the father.

**Man has Soul:** The Scriptures not only show man has a soul, but that man is a living soul. Man is spirit, soul and body. (1 Thessalonians 5:23 & Hebrews 4:12). The word “soul” is used of man about 400 times in the Bible. Man is a spirit, yet he has a soul with mind, will and emotions.

**Animals have Soul:** The Hebrew word “nephesh” for “soul” is also translated “living creature” and is used to refer to “animal soul”. It is used of beasts several times in the Word of God (Genesis 1:21, 24; 2:19; 9:10, 12, 15, 16; Leviticus 11:46; Ecclesiastes 12:7). However, there is a definite distinction between animal soul and human soul. The soul life of man is manifested in mind, will and emotions, as well as in bodily instincts. Human soul is now sinful. Animal soul is not. Animals do not have a spirit, nor are they able to know and commune with God. They do not have a conscience, nor are they able to sin and thus be accountable to God. Man was made in the image and likeness of God; not the animals. Man’s blood is of higher value to God than animal blood. Some of the major differences between man and beast are that man has a spirit, capable of knowing God; that man is a moral being having a conscience and that he is responsible and accountable before God. This is not so of animals. Animals cannot be born again, walk with God, love God nor worship Him intelligently, as can man made in God’s image. Man also has the capacity for immortality. The animals do not.

4. **Associated with other Parts of Man’s being.**

**A. Spirit, soul and body:** This is significant of the whole personality of man (1Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12).

**B. Spirit and soul:** This is significant of the eternal and invisible parts of man’s being; involving the God conscious part, the self-conscious part of man, with mind, will and emotions. (Isaiah 57:15-16).

**C. Spirit and Body:** This involves the God conscious and sense conscious parts of man. (Daniel 7:15; 1 Corinthians 14:14)

**D. Body and Soul:** This speaks of the self-conscious and sense conscious parts of man. (Matthew 10:28; Luke 12:4).

**E. Soul and Blood:** This speaks of the soul life that is in the blood (Leviticus 3:17; 17:11; Isaiah 53:10, 12). Blood is the source and holder of physical life. The heart is the pump causing the blood to carry life to the whole body. The blood of man has become the seat of corruption,
sickness, disease, and death. Blood speaks of the life of man - thus, God could take the blood of Jesus, which is precious and incorruptible, and make atonement for man’s sin. Blood has value. The blood of animals is of lesser value than the blood of man (Genesis 9:6). The blood of martyrs is valuable to God (Matthew 23:35; Revelation 6:9, 10; Genesis 4:10; Hebrews 12:24; Job 24:12). The blood of Christ is of infinite value because it is the blood of God (1 Peter 1:19; Hebrews 9:12). So, when the soul and blood are associated in Scripture it speaks of the soul life which is in the blood that is conveyed by the blood, giving a person consciousness physically. In death, the blood perishes but the soul life, with its faculties, continue to exist.

F. Soul, Heart Mind and Strength: The soul, heart, mind and strength are used to set forth man’s faculties (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30; Deuteronomy 6:11, 4:29).

5. It is used of the Human Soul

The human soul has the faculties of mind, will and emotions.

A. The mind includes the thoughts, imaginations, understanding, memory, reason and intellect. Heart and mind are connected in Scripture. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). It is out of the heart that thoughts proceed (Mark 7:20-23). This is not referring to the physical heart but to the soul faculty (Psalm 46:2; Ezekiel 27:25-27; Exodus 15:18; Matthew 12:39-40; Genesis 6:5; 8:21; 17:17; Exodus 23:9; Deuteronomy 4:9, 29, 39; 2 Kings 10:30-31).

B. The will is the ability to choose and make decisions. The heart and will are also connected in Scripture (1 Chronicles 29:9; Exodus 35:5, 29; Psalm 9:11).

C. The emotions involve the feelings, good or bad, which are the result of good/bad behaviour or good/bad attitudes. The emotions of joy (Isaiah 65:14), exultation (Acts 2:46), pain (Proverbs 25:20), sorrow (Psalm 14:1 102:4), anger (Proverbs 23:7), and fear (Jeremiah 32:40) all centre in the soul.

Body:

The sense or world-conscious part of man is capable of knowing and receiving things from the world around him. God made and formed man’s body out of the dust of the earth, as a potter forms a clay vessel (Genesis 1:26-27 2:7; Job 10:9 Genesis 3:19; 1 Timothy 2:13). It is the physical part of man which is similar to the brute creation. The Scripture gives the following designations and information concerning the human body.

The Human Body is a House (11 Corinthians 5:1)

As a house is built to be indwelt by someone, so man was built to be indwelt by the Spirit of God. Jesus spoke of unclean spirits that desire to live in man’s body as a house (Matthew 12:43-45).

The Human Body is Tabernacle (2 Corinthians 5:1-4; John 1:14; 2 Peter 1:13).

A Tabernacle is a tent. Christ’s body, as well as our own human bodies, is likened to tents. It is
significant of the fact that we are pilgrims. At physical death, the tent is taken down not dissolved, as the spirit and soul depart.

**The Human Body is a Temple** (John 2:21; 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19-20; 1 Kings 8:27-28).

The body of Jesus was likened to a Temple. So is the believer’s body. It is to be a habitation of God by the Spirit, teaching the same truth as that of the tabernacle (Ephesians 2:21-22). We are to present this purchased body to the Lord and keep the temple clean, pure and holy for His dwelling (1 Corinthians 6:20; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 10:22).

**The Human Body is a Sheath** (Daniel 7:15).

The human body here is likened to a sheath in which the spirit is placed like a sword. At death, the sword of the spirit is withdrawn from the sheath and the sheath decays.

**The Human Body is Earthly** (1 Corinthians 15:47; Psalm 103:14; Genesis 2:7; 3:19).

The first Adam had a natural and earthly body prepared and placed upon him. It is from the dust of the earth and at death it returns to dust. The human body has the same ingredients in it as the dust. Its whole substance comes from the earth and all that pertains to it.

**The Human Body is a Body of Humiliation** (Philippians 3:21; Job 19:25-27).

The body is spoken of as being “our vile body” in Philippians. It is literally “the body of our humiliation”. This is particularly true since the fall of man. Sin has subjected man’s body to sickness, disease, infirmity, corruption and death (1 Corinthians 15:33). Mankind groans in this mortal or death doomed body (2 Corinthians 5:2). It is indeed the body of our humiliation and because of this God gave Israel very strict laws for governing and cleanliness of bodily life, as seen especially in Leviticus.

**The Human Body is governed by Senses**

The body, being the instrument of the soul, and being the world conscious part of man is governed by five senses; seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. By these five faculties man acquires knowledge of the external world, communicates with mankind and cares for his physical and mental well-being.

In due time God will redeem the believer’s body from all corruption and mortality and make it like Christ’s glorious body (Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; 2
Corinthians 5:1-5).

God’s order for man to find fulfillment as man is to maintain proper order of spirit, soul and body, subject to the Word and Spirit of God. Any violation or corruption in these areas of man’s being brings chaos. Man was created by God, to be filled with God. Apart from God, man finds neither purpose nor fulfillment in life. Therefore, man becomes self-willed, frustrated, self-centred, confused and a continual vacuum; spiritually, psychologically and physically. The man who finds completeness and fulfillment in life is the man who knows God. It is God’s purpose that man’s whole being be redeemed. Redemptive power will perfect man’s spirit, cleanse and purify his mind, will and emotions, and ultimately redeem his body.