

*The*  
**Lamp**  
*of the*  
**Lord**

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*Biblical Perspective Of The Human Soul*



Gerrie Malan

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# THE LAMP OF THE LORD

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**Gerrie Malan**



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Special Improved and Enhanced PDF Edition  
(Available only through the author's website)

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## DEDICATION

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**T**his book flowed forth from one chapter of my doctoral thesis at Calvary University.

I present it in honour of our heavenly Father, who gave His Son as the light of the world, and His Word as the lamp for our feet and light unto our path.

To Martie, my soul mate of 44 years, and pillar at my side: Without her, I would have been a very incomplete person; and without her encouragement, this book would not have been.

Thank you to Petru, my daughter, for the illustrations I used in the second chapter.

Lastly, thank you to my friends who contributed by reading and commenting on the original edition. Their contributions have been instrumental in improving this edition.





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## FOREWORD

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A young acquaintance visited us once as I was busy working on the draft manuscript of this book. His interest aroused, he asked me about the topic. After listening to my concise overview, he made two important and valid comments:

- If I say the soul and spirit are, as I understand it to be from a biblical point of view, one undividable entity, then how should he understand his own one incredible moment of ‘spiritual’ experience that changed his life? (A farm boy, he went to a secluded bush on their farm with his pistol, intent on suicide. When he came to his senses again, he found himself back in their home).
- Also, where are we heading in the church with all our doctrinal differences? What do I and others want to attain with all our ‘deep’ exegetical writings and teachings?

Those are very valid questions that I think, are echoes of questions in the hearts of many within the Christian church communities today, as well as in the hearts of many who have left the institutional church in hurt and disillusionment. In my own contemplations I have cried out to the Lord that the one thing I never wanted to have part of again in my life, is to stifle or quench the Holy Spirit in His ministry of grace to a humankind the Father loved so much that He gave His only begotten Son as sacrifice once for all, that we might have life abundantly as sons (and daughters) of the Most High God. Then again, I also realised that I could no longer ignore or compromise a calling to know and teach the unpolluted and undiluted truth that has been given to us by the Divine Inspiration in the Scriptures we know as the Bible, along whichever avenue the Lord would open up for me, uncomfortable as it may be.

A regular electronic newsletter brought me the answer to the young man's second question in the words of A.W. Tozer: *"It would be impossible to overemphasize the importance of sound doctrine in the life of a Christian. Right thinking about all spiritual matters is imperative if we would have right living. As men do not gather grapes of thorns nor figs of thistles, sound character does not grow out of unsound teaching...All a man, a church or a denomination needs to guarantee deterioration of doctrine is to take everything for granted and do nothing. The unattended garden will soon be overrun with weeds; the heart that fails to cultivate truth and root out error will shortly be a theological wilderness."*

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**The unattended garden  
will soon be overrun  
with weeds. (A.W. Tozer)**

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### **MAKING THE SCRIPTURES COMPLICATED**

Interestingly, not long after the young man's visit I heard a local pastor say during his weekly television program that he did not have much appreciation for theologians and theology. To his mind, theology is bound up in the past. (I have had the privilege to meet him since hearing his message, and we were able to share a chuckle and agree on his reservations about the fruit of academic theology). So, the question surfaces again: indeed, where are we going? Are we not making the Scriptures so complicated that they fail to influence lives according to the Lord's heart? I recall once reading someone's description of another person as being so heavenly minded that he was of no earthly good. Then again, the heading of an article in a recent popular Christian magazine read: *"Why is there confusion about true Christianity?"* (Georgiou, 2008), but it unfortunately continued in content from a point of departure that was rooted in error. The result could thus not avoid being an argument in defence of an unbiblical view. Indeed, once more, where are we going?

### **POOR SUBSTITUTES**

Charles Finney wrote many, many years ago: *"It is painful to observe the constant tendency to substitute culture for this Holy Spirit power, or human eloquence in place of this divine endowment. I fear this tendency is increasing in the church. The churches are calling for men of great learning and eloquence instead of men who are deeply baptized with the Holy Ghost...A theological Professor who does not believe in*

*this enduement of power and who does not possess it in a manifold degree, can not fail to be a stumbling block to his students” (1896).*

To this we can add some more wise words of A.W. Tozer (2008): *“The devil is a better theologian than any of us and is a devil still.”* Please understand that I do not have an action against theologians in their personhood or their sincerity, but against the products of their scholarly activities. After all, in academic terms, I, Gerrie, am also a theologian.

### **RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH**

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**What measure of deviance from accurate truth is tolerable and what not?**

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Scripture sounds warning after warning that one should rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15). If we continue teaching doctrines that are rooted in wrong understanding or interpretation,

however sincere the heart may be, where do we draw the line? What measure of deviance from the accurate truth would be tolerable or acceptable and what not? Using biblical terminology does not make something biblically accurate. One survey in the United States of America found 82 percent of Americans thought *“God helps those that help themselves”* was a Bible verse, which made it the ‘best known verse in the Bible’ (Mohler, 2004). It is sad testimony to realise that there really is no such verse in the Bible.

### **LIKE A BIG GUN OFF TARGET**

I was a gunner during my national military service – a member of the South African artillery. From my experiences during that time I know very well how crucial accuracy is for the artillery. If one of those big guns is off the target direction by only one half of a degree, and the projectile flight angle is set correctly, it might sound like a small error – until you realise that the point of explosion of the projectile is kilometres away from those guns. Instead of reaching the true target, severe and unintended damage elsewhere is the result – you could even end up killing your own men. And we only used the old 25 pounder guns from the Second World War at the time, not the much bigger calibres of today. Now put two of these big guns side by side with each one off line by one half of a degree, and to different sides ...! We

only have to look at the frightening array of Christian doctrines that are supposedly rooted in the same Scriptures to realise that one can certainly see figurative similarities to big guns that are off target at the point of impact, however small the deviation might have seemed at first. Imagine the effect ten or twenty years down the line if the truth is not presented to confront the error along the way.

During a televised church service I stumbled upon some years ago, Dr. Ravi Zacharias told the story of a clockmaker who saw a man set his watch by the clocks in the shop window every morning. Curious, he later asked the man about this and was told the man was the time-keeper at a nearby factory. His watch wasn't very good, and so he set it each morning by the clockmaker's watches. The clockmaker then confessed his clocks weren't keeping time too well either, and he set them each afternoon by the factory's closing time whistle! Zacharias concluded that if two wrong things synchronize themselves by each other, they get 'wronger and wronger' all the time. Sadly, this is such a valid illustration of a number of Christian doctrines of today.

### **WHAT FILTER AM I LOOKING THROUGH?**

What I do know above all doubt is that one's foundational beliefs in this regard will influence your interpretation of Scripture all the time, and of course that goes for me too. I also know that many of today's teachings and courses on emotional healing and spiritual warfare, for example, are rooted and grounded in doctrines on the spirit-soul-concepts. I have gone that way, having specialised in 'spiritual warfare' during my second year of Christian counselling studies! And sadly, I realise today that much of it was unscriptural, however impressive and good the results of such a ministry might have seemed to be. We cannot deny that there are schools of Psychology, for example, that rightly also report good results to their work, although they do not claim, and may even explicitly reject, any biblical foundation or belief for their procedures.

### **INTEGRITY NOT QUESTIONED**

Importantly, I wish to underline the fact that wherever I mention the names of authors and preachers together with statements from their work, I am in no way questioning their sincerity or integrity, whether I disagree only slightly with their views, or whether radically. Because

my focus is on a specific topic, I do not have the opportunity to present all the good contributions in their work, and I gladly also learn from them. I believe their work is rooted in a sincere quest for the truth throughout as well. My approach needs to remain firmly on the Berean principle of Acts 17:11; a principle I deal with during the following chapters. There are many respects in which those viewpoints that I do not agree with as being scripturally correct, actually challenged me into a thorough study of the relevant topic. In that sense, I am indebted to all those authors and preachers, although it would have been wonderful if we could all teach God's word in one accord of understanding. Unfortunately, man's traditions are hard to break through, and anyone who dares to question those traditions and its teaching run the risk of being labelled a rebel or embittered person. It is certainly sad testimony that a sixty-eight year old should be searching for biblical accuracy after more than sixty years in the church.

### **MY WIFE AND FRIENDS**

I am so indebted to my wife, Martie, for her contribution: scrutinising, asking, commenting, encouraging, differing and providing by way of research. There are also others among our friends who have done the same. All have helped me to guard my understanding from a spirit of criticism, and to ensure an honest, constructive analysis of the Scriptures in order to contribute to an accurate understanding of the truth about the soul and spirit of the human being. Furthermore, I accept there might still be a lot to learn in this regard that I may not fully understand yet.

Therefore, He said to them, "Every student of Scripture instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who brings out of his storeroom what is new and what is old" (Matt 13:52; HCSB).

And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2, HCSB).

Gerrie Malan  
Hibberdene  
South Africa  
September 2014



# INTRODUCTION

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*“And the LORD God formed man (of) the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7; KJV).*

*“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam (was made) a quickening spirit” (1 Cor 15:45; KJV)*

## INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

### **My study of core biblical concepts**

**I** started to research Paul’s ‘in Christ’ concept together with Christ’s ‘born again’ concept for a doctoral thesis during 2006, expecting to find a clear and very direct link between the two.

As both expressions have become increasingly popular during the last decades, it seemed necessary to ensure at least that my own understanding of these concepts was rooted and grounded firmly in the Scriptures. In the process, it became clear early on in my study that the concepts of the human soul and spirit, and parallel popular expressions such as ‘spiritual’ and ‘soul-ish’ also needed to be defined accurately. They seemed to be expressions that were being used widely on daily Christian television broadcasts, and by writers of the stream of popular Christian books that flood the shelves of Christian bookstores today, but without clear definition by preachers – especially Bible based definitions. Then, of course, we need to consider the power of the internet which has brought the ability to publish one’s opinions and viewpoints, to almost everyone at large. That ability is at my disposal too, and with it comes the responsibility to use it in good



scholarly fashion, of course. Whether we succeed is open to readers' evaluation at all times. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for any of us to claim flawless objectivity all the time.

As a point of departure I intended to write a page or perhaps two in my thesis, to define the concepts of the soul and spirit in order to ensure my readers (or examiners) would know exactly what I meant whenever I used such terms. This was not to be. I became suddenly confronted with a growing realisation of just how flawed and even unscriptural my knowledge and understanding seemed to be in this area. My intended two pages swelled to 42 by the time I completed the thesis in October 2007, and my study of the concepts have continued ever since. In the process I have found a growing understanding of the scriptural position on the soul of the human.

## **BACKGROUND OF MY KNOWLEDGE BASE**

### **Reformed to Pentecostal to Charismatic to...?**

I grew up in one of South Africa's mainline reformed Afrikaans churches and so did Martie, my wife of 44 years. We remained members of that denomination for almost 44 years of our lives, and I served in the leadership of several of its congregations in different parts of South Africa (courtesy of all the transfers by my employer). Our lives were transformed in 1995, however, when I suffered severe burnout in the workplace as I was nearing my 50th birthday. One of the results of this transformation has been an ongoing search for more manifest truth of what we were reading in the Scriptures, but not really experiencing in church.

Consequently, we ended our longstanding membership of the reformed denomination to embark on a journey that would take us through the Pentecostal church world and later into the Charismatic church world with its often programmed focus on signs, wonders and miracles. Like a pendulum, our mindset swung from the conservative side right across to the radical opposite. Now, some eighteen years later, the pendulum has seemingly been coming to rest somewhere between the two opposites as we find ourselves on a journey of discovery through the Scriptures, as if it were for the first time.

## **Impressed by wrong doctrine**

Part of our journey included two years' of study in Christian counselling at a well-known South African School of Christian Counselling, Healing and Deliverance. Whereas our experience of so many years in the reformed denomination hardly gave us more than a casual consideration and understanding of concepts such as 'soul', 'spirit' and 'spiritual', it was suddenly part of the everyday reading in lecture notes and in our prescribed books by Christian writers. Every statement was so wonderfully clothed in biblical terminology and it all just seemed so right. Martie and I could not drink enough from this new fountain of knowledge we discovered. The essence of it all was that man was presented to us as a threefold (or tripartite) being, comprising of spirit, soul, and body as it was described by 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12. It seemed clear enough and scriptural beyond any doubt:

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I (pray God) your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:23).

For the word of God (is) quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and (is) a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb 4:12; KJV).

Our theology and doctrine became transformed and formed into this simple underlying understanding of practical Christian living on the foundation of these two verses of Scripture: Man is a spirit, has a soul, and lives in a body. This was the foundation upon which almost every module of our counselling diploma course curriculum was built. And so many popular books of our time are rooted in this same essence.

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**We were taught man is a spirit, has a soul, and lives in a body.**

---

## **Another form of bondage**

My later studies continued on this accepted knowledge base as a point of departure. In the whole process, the spirit was pictured as the godly part of man, with the soul mostly the bad part. The negative term 'soulish' became a popular part of the vocabulary. This approach seemingly provided simple explanations to difficult situations, such as

why a believer could have a demon; or why generational curses were common and provided such a challenge to one's ability to live a blessed Christian life. Today I realise that this knowledge brought just another form of bondage instead of freedom that the very term 'deliverance' implied, for the perception of the strength of all kinds of spiritual adversaries were imprinted into our minds through lecture after lecture, and book after book. Much of it was rooted in the Mosaic Law, for example, the teaching that a child born outside of wedlock (generally called an illegitimate child) was cursed unto the tenth generation. The administering of 'deliverance' from this and other curses became embedded as an almost automatic, ritualistic point of departure in our counselling sessions.

Although we spoke out against the bondage of the Law, we were imprisoned by a new and mixed set of laws without realising it. The message of salvation by grace came in at only a poor second place, if at all. We were taught, for example, that all sorts of very detailed renunciation prayers were necessary to ensure a Christian life that was free from demonic oppression. It was as if we needed to inform God in detail in the prayers what every occult organisation or curse was all about. Ironically, the pro-forma prayers provided by different authors clearly differed in their content, and thus there was not even consistency in the information we were giving God, so to speak.

### **Over-spiritualisation of Scripture**

There is another and more recent side, too. As I view Christian television broadcasts and read Christian newsletters and articles, which come mostly from the Charismatic (and to some extent the Pentecostal) church environment, I have a growing concern about the significant measure of the over-spiritualisation of Scripture that I am observing. Take the spirit of heaviness mentioned in Isaiah 61:3, for example. It is often presented to be a demon of depression. The same happens with Hannah's sorrowful spirit in 1 Samuel 1:15. In the process, I hear all too often how believers are being told to shed their 'souliness' and to become 'spiritual' instead.

I will show later that the creation of this word, 'soulish', is perhaps one of the great tragedies that has crept into popular Christian teaching on the soul/spirit topic.

## VARIATIONS OF UNDERSTANDING

### Three main groups

As my knowledge and understanding started to grow through continuous research and study, I realised that this constitutional nature of the human, as it is called in academic (or so-called scholarly) circles, has been subject to a considerable variety of interpretations and doctrinal positioning in the world of Christendom over centuries. It is still the position today. There are three main groups of viewpoints, and they also display variations of understanding and positioning even within the groups themselves:

- The first group sees the human as simply a single self. In other words, the human is not divided into soul and body, or spirit, soul and body as the other groups do. This view of the human nature is called **monism**.
- A second group states that the Bible describes the human in terms of two parts, namely the soul and body. They, therefore, have a twofold understanding (which is called **dichotomism**). For them, the human soul and spirit are the same thing.
- The third and popular modern understanding of what the Bible teaches is a threefold one (which is called **trichotomism**). The followers of this view believe the Bible teaches that the human consists of three parts, namely spirit, soul and body. Because this is the popular view one finds in Christian books and television programs today, I discuss it with all its variations in the third chapter, in which I try to point out the flaws that I see in the variety of teachings of those who follow this position.

### The views of Wommack

Andrew Wommack, a well-known personality of Christian television, is one of those who hold the threefold doctrinal position. Although I do not agree with his threefold position, he has probably quite correctly stated that the understanding of spirit, soul and body is critically important to every believer; in fact, he regarded it as the foundation to the understanding of the rest of Scripture. Yet, he believes that although many Christians might have an intellectual understanding, very few of them really have a functional understanding of spirit, soul

and body in their daily lives (1997-2007). I will show, as we progress, what I believe the basic errors in Wommack's own understanding are.

### **Influence of incorrect translations**

A group called The Third Testament claims in an article on their website that confusion has prevailed in the understanding of the concepts of spirit and soul since the early translations of the Old and New Testament due to incorrect use (144000.net, 2007). The Institute for Scripture Research in South Africa seemingly agrees as they list one of their reasons for producing yet another translation of the Scriptures (called The Scriptures), the need to restore the meaning to many words, which have become popular to use, but, which do not accurately reflect the original meaning anymore. They list the word 'soul' as one of these (2007: xi).

### **Affecting one's beliefs about knowing God.**

Whichever one of the above doctrinal positionings you choose, you cannot escape the fact that what one believes about the relationship of the human soul and spirit will affect what one believes to be involved in knowing God. May I add that in the expression 'knowing God' I do not simply understand an intellectual acknowledgement, but a real manifest, relational knowledge.

Also, I feel the need to refer again to my earlier example (in the foreword), of big guns that are on or off target - our beliefs and our relational knowledge of God can be misdirected by inaccurate understanding of the Scriptures.

## **HEBRAIC UNDERSTANDING**

### **The need to consult Hebraic sources**

In my search for understanding of the human makeup in terms of the Scriptures, I have also sought knowledge from Hebraic sources (including Jewish teachers of Judaism). The reason I chose to do so is that while the Scriptures of the Bible are believed to have been inspired or given by the Holy Spirit, it remains historical reality that, except for Luke, the authors were all Hebrews, and the background and literary roots of their writings had mostly been the Hebraic culture (irrespective of whether some wrote in Greek or not).

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**Jesus of Nazareth  
rooted His teaching and  
methods firmly in the  
known culture of His  
time.**

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We cannot escape the fact that Jesus of Nazareth rooted His teaching and methods firmly in the known culture of His time. It is, after all, through His people, the Hebrew nation, that God's name (and therefore, His very being) has been revealed throughout all the

earth (Ex 9:16; Ezek 5:5).

Personally, I feel that much of the error in doctrines can be traced back to an unwillingness to work with the cultural and historical context within which specific portions of the Bible were written.

### **Conceptualised in Hebrew mind and literature**

Soul and spirit are, firstly and historically, widely used Old Testament concepts of God's creative miracle (specifically of human life) and were therefore conceptualised and established throughout Old Testament history in the Hebrew mind and literature. I honestly do not see how we can form an accurate understanding of the meaning of these concepts without at least seriously considering the Hebrew mindset in this regard. It has nothing to do with Judaism and their religious precepts and traditions, but everything with the culture and historical legacy of which Jesus of Nazareth was undeniably fully part. What would those first readers or audiences (in view of the place of oral tradition in their lives) have understood?

The need to take this course will become evident as we progress through the next chapters. I have, for example, seen Christian preachers make simple but profound blunders in their sermons, simply because they would not consider or were otherwise ignorant of certain Hebraisms (e.g. Hebrew idioms) in the Scriptures. In fact, I have seen preachers of Afrikaner upbringing make blunders in their English sermons simply because they did not properly consult an English dictionary and thesaurus. While I might, for example, be able to write on a reasonable level of English language usage, I will probably never be able to divorce my product from my Afrikaner cultural background and way of thinking. In the same way, I suspect that those who wrote the New Testament manuscripts in Greek, (although there is much debate on whether the originals were really written in Greek) could hardly have separated their product completely from their Hebraic cultural background and upbringing.

Hebrew was a God-centred language, spoken by God-centred people, whereas Greek was a humanistic language, the language of science, of facts and reason, Hebrew thought patterns were vibrant, rich and colourful, as against the passivity of Greek language.

Abstract thought, for example, was always expressed through concrete ideas. In Hebrew, the mountains could break forth into shouts of joy and all the trees of the field could clap their hands. No wonder, then, that Martin Luther, struggling to translate the Hebrew Bible into German, would realise that it was impossible to convey so much so briefly in any other language.

### **Similar approach by Lightfoot in the 17th century**

Since accepting this understanding and approach in my own mind, I have found a similar approach, for example, in the works of Bishop John Lightfoot's 1658 Commentary of the New Testament:

For, first, when all the books of the New Testament were written by Jews, and among Jews, and unto them; and when all the discourses made there, were made in like manner by Jews, and to Jews, and among them; I was always fully persuaded, as of a thing past all doubting, that that Testament could not but everywhere taste of and retain the Jews' style, idiom, form, and rule of speaking.

And hence, in the second place, I concluded as assuredly that, in the obscurer places of that Testament (which are very many), the best and most natural method of searching out the sense is, to inquire how, and in what sense, those phrases and manners of speech were understood, according to the vulgar and common dialect and opinion of that nation; and how they took them, by whom they were spoken, and by whom they were heard. For it is no matter what we can beat out concerning those manners of speech on the anvil of our own conceit, but what they signified among them, in their ordinary sense and speech. And since this could be found out no other way than by consulting Talmudic authors, who both speak in the vulgar dialect of the Jews, and also handle and reveal all Jewish matters; being induced by these reasons, I applied myself chiefly to the reading of these books. I knew, indeed, well enough, that I must certainly wrestle with infinite difficulties, and

such as were hardly to be overcome; yet I undervalued them all, and armed myself with a firm purpose, that, if it were possible, I might arrive to a fuller and more deep knowledge and understanding of the style and dialect of the New Testament.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

I hope that with this book, I will at least stimulate in every reader a willingness to consider thoroughly what I write, and then to follow the Biblical example of the Bereans in Acts 17:11, which is to search the Scriptures for yourself to see if what I have written is indeed so. You will notice that I try to steer clear of indiscriminate use of strong imperative statements (this is...; you must...!) in bringing across what I believe I have found to be the Scriptural position on the topic of the human nature. I want to exhort people to become students of the Bible, not students or followers of my view or of any other person's view of what the Bible teaches.

#### **Facilitation and not instruction**

I hope that I can be a facilitator who helps you in your search for Biblical truth, more than coming across as an instructional teacher. Each one of us has to take responsibility for what we believe; we cannot pass that responsibility on to someone else. I have made the mistake in the past of blindly believing the teaching of good and sincere people whose lives testified of a deep love for God and the Word He inspired. Still, in my evaluation they were and are sometimes wrong in their interpretation. On the other hand, they (and perhaps you too) might judge that I am the one who has it all wrong. How wonderful it would be if we could sit and together search for the fullness of the truth; to rightly divide the word of truth unto those who come under our teaching!

I realise that I too have to constantly remind myself of the principle of responsibility established in the words of the apostle James:

My brethren, be not many masters [teachers], knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation [stricter judgment] (Jas 3:1, KJV).



## **The Bereans of Acts 17:11**

Paul explained the Scriptures to the Bereans daily as he did in Thessalonica (from where he had to flee in the night), but the Bereans, instead of resenting his interpretation, examined the Scriptures for themselves to see if Paul was speaking the truth. The Greek word *anakrinō* means to sift up and down, make careful and exact research as in legal processes. Paul succeeded in making them into true students of the Scriptures. This is a habit worthy of following again today.

## **God knows the heart**

I doubt if any of us could say that we know someone who has all the knowledge of the Bible neatly wound up and in place beyond any measure of error. The record of the New Testament reflects a similar position among the congregations of that time. What I do know is that the Master Teacher had very little, if any, compassion for the religious who served God with their mouths, but with hearts far removed from Him by human doctrines (or traditions).

Hypocrites! How rightly Isaiah prophesied about you when he said: This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. Their reverence for me is worthless; the lessons they teach are nothing but human commandments” (Matt 15:7-9, NJB. See Isa 29:13).

The opposite would then surely also be true. I have often remarked that I am so glad God hears the words of our heart and not those of our mouth; otherwise we would be in deep trouble:

(...) the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart (1 Sam 16:7).

It is your privilege and right to disagree with my understanding of the Scriptures. In those respects that you do, I would always be willing to receive your interpretation and seek the truth in partnership with you. Wherever it becomes clear that I might be in error, I would willingly acknowledge and rectify or qualify my position. My desire is to rightly divide the word of truth and to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. I have no desire for sensation, or a desire to claim

new revelation, and to create a new doctrine or confuse those who love the Lord and His Word. I desire to leave a legacy of teaching the truth. Hopefully, I can succeed in keeping it all uncomplicated, which, I realise, is often more easily said than done.

That we can clearly see the manifest presence of the Lord's Holy Spirit in many congregations, is a reality, not because of the accuracy of all the doctrine being taught there, but despite the measure of inaccuracies that may abound. It is all grace, not works!

### **Chinese Brother Yun (known as 'the heavenly man'):**

Perhaps we can all consider the findings of an outsider to our Western views on Bible teaching and preaching:

The first thing needed for revival to return to your [Western] churches is the Word of the Lord. God's Word is missing. Sure, there are many preachers and thousands of tapes and videos of Bible teaching, but so little contains the sharp truth of God's Word. It is the truth that will set you free (Brother Yun & Hattaway, P., 2002: 296).

### **Doctrines built on fragmented Scripture**

Preachers, professional theologians, novice Bible readers and the like, have succeeded in taking simple concepts in the Bible, and making them very complicated. Historical fact has at times been twisted beyond recognition into fiction. In order to unravel and expose the error, one sometimes needs to point out those views that you deem to be in error before showing what you understand to be the true Biblical position. Therefore, please bear with me as I take a longish route to get to the core of the truth. I hope that in doing so, I am able to equip my readers (or at least those who agree with what I write) with the knowledge to answer those who have not rightly divided the word of truth. Those who do not agree ...well, I hope that I have been able at least to challenge you to carefully consider and test long held understanding against what has been written as well.

Furthermore, bear in mind that the original texts of the Bible did not have chapters and verses. These were only added in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively. Unfortunately it has done more harm than good. Instead of reading and understanding the individual books

or letters as units, our learning has been built on fragmented Scripture and the ripping of portions out of its full context – something that was never intended. Sadly, much of our modern doctrines have flowed forth out of this fragmentation (Viola & Barna, 2008: 222). In the words of Frank Viola (2008: 43): “(...) *we have inherited a ‘cut-and-paste’ approach to Bible study. In this approach, out-of-context ‘proof texts’ are pieced together to support man-made doctrines and practices. This process is largely unconscious. And two things make it very easy. First, the New Testament letters aren’t arranged in chronological order. Second, the New Testament letters are divided into chapters and verses.*”

In the end, however, as I have said before, whatever anyone of us believes remains our individual responsibility. The Bereans of Acts 17:11 were eagerly interested in the message of Paul and Silas but they still wanted to confirm the truth of it all for themselves.

# THE LAMP OR CANDLE OF THE LORD

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*“The spirit of man (is) the candle of the Lord, searching the inward parts of the belly” (Prov 20:27, KJV).*

*“The human spirit is the lamp of Yahweh – searching the deepest self” (NJB).*

*“The human spirit is a lamp of Adonai; it searches one’s inmost being” (CJB).*

## INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

### Lamp of the Lord

The Bible does not give a detailed or clear description of the composition of the soul or spirit. Such descriptions found in so many Christian books and other media are the assumptions of men dressed up in biblical terminology. The above verse, as it is rendered in three different Bible versions, is the closest that the Bible comes to do so, and at face value the description seems simple and clear enough. It describes the spirit as the candle or lamp of the Lord. The two words – candle and lamp - indicate the same thing in the ancient setting. It was usually a small pottery bowl with a spout and a wick that was fed by or drenched in crude olive oil.

Please note that the focus is not on the bowl of the lamp or on the candlestick, but on the light that is brought forth by the flame and through which it searches the innermost being of the human. It is a light that was kindled by God.

## **Influence of Bible times cultures**

But, as we go along you will see that all is not always as simple and straightforward as it may seem. Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek, from which our English and Afrikaans versions have mostly been translated, unavoidably carry meanings that are rooted in the specific cultures they stem from. They also have a number of unique characteristics that set them apart from our own languages.

A single word in these biblical languages may have several meanings for which we will, for example, have to study the context carefully in order to select the intended meaning. Then again, different words in the biblical languages may have the same meaning in the specific contexts they have been used in.

## **Origin of bizarre teaching**

Preachers and teachers who have ignored these realities have produced many wrong and even bizarre sermons and teachings, including many popular Christian books and modern seminars. Unfortunately, many people simply read and accept what the authors have written, especially if they have found that writer to be an exciting personality on the Christian television channels. I have been at that place! And the concept of the human soul and spirit has been a major topic and foundation of many popular seminars in recent years, especially seminars on inner healing and deliverance. I have been there too! We also need to consider the Biblical messages conveyed by popular Gospel music. Have you ever considered the powerful communication medium music is and have you considered the content of all the ‘teaching’ they convey with their songs?

Today I know better and I cannot remain silent when I see how people are being led into a wrong doctrine, which often includes an over-spiritualisation of the concept of spirit within specific contexts, which mean something else. I will point out such cases as we go along, but I give specific attention to this in the fifth chapter 5, in which I give attention to alternative meanings of the term ‘spirit’.

## IN THE BEGINNING

### First mention of soul and spirit

Before considering a selection of all the different views and teachings on this subject, let us go back to the very first instances in which the expressions of soul and spirit are mentioned in the English versions of the Bible:

And the LORD God formed man (of) the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man **became a living soul** (Gen 2:7, KJV).

The concept of spirit is actually first found in Genesis 1:2 and then 6:3, but both these occurrences reflect the Spirit of the Lord. It is only much later, in Genesis 41:8 that the expression spirit is used for the first time in connection with a human being (the Pharaoh of Egypt in the time of Joseph):

And it came to pass at the end of two full years that Pharaoh dreamed (...) And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, (it was) a dream. And it came to pass in the morning that his **spirit** was troubled (...) (KJV).

### Became a living soul

As one can see from Genesis 2:7, it does not give a clear description of what the soul entails. Furthermore, it does not state that man received a soul; it states that he **became** a living soul. The Hebrew word for 'became' is *chaya*, and it literally means to exist. That is, be or become, or come to pass (Strong). This early verse in itself refutes the notion that man **has** a soul. **Scripture states that he is one.** In this context, it indicates a singular, indivisible living being. Furthermore, it makes no separate mention of a spirit of the human. Similarly, Genesis 41:8 does not describe what pharaoh's 'spirit' entails, and it makes no mention of a 'soul'.

What is factual, is that two different Hebrew words are used in these verses, namely:

- *Nephesh* (or *nefesh*), which is translated 'soul' in Genesis 2:7; and
- *Ruach*, which is translated 'spirit' in Genesis.41:8.

## Responsibility challenged

This situation might seem simple enough: two different words which present two different concepts. Consequently it seems straightforward and logical to find them translated into other languages with different words. However, as I mentioned before, you will see that all is not always as simple as it may seem at first. In the first place, as I will point out as we go along, there are other words that are also translated into English as ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’. Secondly, both above Hebrew words are often explained by the same terms. And thirdly, as Vine, Unger and White (1996: 237-238) point out, there has been an inability to find a consistent English equivalent, even just a small group of proper equivalents, for the term *nephesh*. The King James Version alone uses at least 28 different terms for this one Hebrew word! Among these are appetite, beast, body, creature, dead, dead body, desire, fish, heart, lust, mind, and pleasure

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**The King James Version uses 28 different terms to translate the Hebrew word *nephesh*.**

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Pickle, 2008). We find the same characteristic for the expression *ruach*.

To top it all off, we then progress to the New Testament which has been translated mostly from Greek documents. As I noted before, Greek is a completely different kind of language to Hebrew. It is a language of science, philosophy and fact, not of the Godly life which is at the heart of ancient Hebraic thought (Lawrence, 2010: 8). Nonetheless, the Greek expressions *psuche* and *pneuma* are also translated in different ways, although it is to a lesser extent. Add to this the basic principles of biblical interpretation, such as the principles of first mention, single meaning, and context, and we are faced by quite a challenge in exercising our responsibility to rightly divide the word of truth, and to make sure we are not creating doctrines the Bible never intended!

## THE FLAME OF THE LAMP (OR CANDLE)

### The only clear image

Although the Bible nowhere describes precisely what the soul (or spirit) is composed of, Proverbs 20:27 gives us this one direct image of the light brought forth by a candle. The Bible does not describe concepts by way of worldly or material images, unless they clearly illustrate the specific concept in a way that makes it more easily un-

derstandable, but then also within the Hebraic understanding and not a Westernized one. Consequently, the image of a lamp or candle's flame appears to be a good place to start our journey through the Bible as we study the Word to gain understanding of the soul and spirit concepts.

Let us see what we can learn from the manifest candle flame that could enhance our understanding of the abstract concept of the human soul or spirit.

### **Not the usual word**

Interestingly, the word which is translated spirit in some Bible renditions of Proverbs 20:27, is not the usual Hebrew word *ruach*, and neither is it *nephesh*. It is another word, namely *neshamah*. A prominent website in the Judaism fold explains its meaning as 'soul or breath' (Judaism 101).

Actually, the word 'breath' falls short, and it is more accurate to understand it in dynamic terms, as the act of breathing, or the taking of breath (Vine, et.al., 1996: 237)! The Complete WordStudy of Zodhiates (e-Sword, 2010) states that *neshamah* is a noun meaning wind, breath, and spirit, and that **its meaning is parallel to *nephesh* and *ruach***. It is first used in Genesis 2:7 in which the word *nephesh* is also used:

And the LORD God formed man (of) the dust of the ground, and breathed [naphach] into his nostrils the breath [neshamah] of life; and man became a living soul [nephesh].

However, *ruach* is also described as spirit, wind, breath, while *nephesh* is a noun meaning breath, the inner being with its thoughts and emotions (Vine, et.al., 1996: 588).

Several other Bible Dictionaries I consulted do not address the *neshamah* at all. Please note that these meanings are the basics in all three cases. It is interesting that they all include the word 'breath' as one of their multiple meanings, with some explanations adding different accentuations of breath.

As I noted earlier, Vine, Unger and White declare in connection with *nephesh*, for example, that the real difficulty of the term is seen in the inability of English translations to find a consistent equivalent or even a small group of regular equivalents for the term (1996: 237-238). We



could say the same of *ruach* and *neshamah*. They are all discussed in greater detail later.

The Aramaic equivalents of *nephesh* and *ruach* are *napsha* and *rookha*, respectively. According to George Lamsa (1985: 105), *napsha* can mean person; life; body; and soul. *Rookha* can mean Holy Ghost; spirit; wind; life; rheumatism; in spirits prophecy; and soul.

### **Interpretations and prejudices of translators**

At this stage I need to point out that this dilemma of Bible translators might produce confusing results as they translate their own interpretations and foundational prejudices into their version. The three versions of Proverbs 20:27 I presented at the beginning of this chapter all use the term ‘spirit’ for *neshamah*. The God’s Word Version, however, uses ‘soul’ and so do the authors of several articles on Jewish websites. On the other hand, the old Geneva Bible of the 16th century keeps to the word ‘breath’. It seems that Jewish sources consistently use the expression ‘soul’ as the preferred translation of this word.

It is important to note, however, that the word *neshamah* is only used in connection with God and man, never with regard to irrational living creatures!

A person's **soul** is the Lord’s lamp. It searches his entire innermost being (God’s Word Version).

The light of the Lorde is the **breath** of man, and searcheth all the bowels of the belly (Geneva Translation).

The **soul** of man is a candle of God (Tauber, 2001-2007 & Melech ben Ya’acov, 2011).

### **A flame’s characteristics**

Let us now consider the light of a candle or lamp. This light is brought forth by a flame from the wick. This wick will only continue to bring light (without being burned up quickly itself) as long as it is fed by the oil in the lamp container (alternatively then, from the melting wax in the case of a candle).

A lamp or candle's flame is in itself an interesting phenomenon:

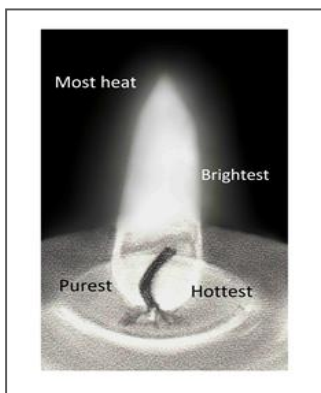
- In the first place, it has several different temperature spots within that single flame.
- And secondly, it has several different colours within itself.



### Different colours and temperatures

If you study the flame closely you might notice a blue part, with parts of red or yellow and even bright white, especially at the edges. The form of the flame is bright oblong, but brighter at the top. It is drawn upward by a current of rising air (a reaction called air convection) that forms around it. The different colours of a flame are determined by the temperature of the flame and of the material being burned (the different substances we find in the flame). For example, the strong orange colour of most wood flames is caused by the heating of sodium in the wood - in other words, by impurities.

If you look carefully, you will see a darker area in the centre, and you may also see a very thin layer of blue flame over the entire surface of the flame.



A flame needs oxygen to burn. The hottest part of the candle flame is the blue part, at 1400 C degrees because that is where the flame has the most oxygen, giving complete combustion. The reddish part is the coolest part, at about 800 C degrees. The flame cools and changes colour as it moves away from the source of the flame and becomes exposed to less oxygen. This temperature change causes the flame's colour to change from blue to the typical yellowish-orange or bright orange at the top, where the flame

is considerably cooler. So, in that single small flame we find temperature differences of 600 C degrees (Nicholas Academy, Experiment #314).

## **A perfect whole**

With all of this said and done, there is one core fact that we have to recognise: the flame itself, with its different composite colours and different temperature spots, remains a perfect and integral whole. You cannot divide it and separate one part from the rest. The flame surges upwards, as if it wants to tear itself loose from the wick, but at the same time it holds tight its grip on the wick which feeds it with the oil that sustains its very continued existence. And it is in this position of conflicting energies that it produces light (Tauber, 2001-2007). Now, is this not a good reflection of man too, whose unseen life essence (soul/spirit) continually reaches out to a higher realm, but at the same time is clinging to its body, which sustains its life on earth? When the wick is consumed the flame dies and there is no more light. There was a unity: without a flame the lamp or candle does not provide light (live), and the flame cannot exist (live) on its own without the lamp or candle. Remember this picture of the candle flame and its characteristics as we progress in our journey through this topic of the human soul or spirit. I stand amazed, once again, by the vibrancy of the Hebrew thought patterns in expressing abstract ideas!

A lamp without a flame is still called a lamp - only, it is lifeless. When the lamp has a flame it has life. This is a good illustration of Genesis 2:7.



## **TWO HEBRAIC UNDERSTANDINGS**

### **Seeking relevant knowledge**

I wish to underline once again that in seeking knowledge from Hebraic sources, I am seeking and drawing knowledge from a cultural background I do not personally have. It has nothing to do with an attempt or desire to promote religious Judaism (or the Law of Moses) as some tend to do. I believe that the Lord Jesus fulfilled or completed the Mosaic dispensation, and that it has been replaced through His life, crucifixion and ascension by the dispensation of grace in the manifest kingdom of God we already live in. To resist seeking knowledge of the culture that provides the background for the Scriptures and

their understanding of key concepts, however, is to run the risk of mis-interpretation of the Scriptures – something I have seen happening over and over again in sermons, television programs and popular contemporary books.

### **Chassidic Authors**

Chassidism (or Hassidism) is an orthodox Jewish movement that was founded in Poland in the 18th century. Chassidic Philosophy is described as the knowledge of God, which it maintains is the essence of the Torah (basically the first five books of the Old Testament) and of everything in the world. Their teachings are founded on two theoretical conceptions:

- The omnipresence of God (known as religious panentheism)
- The idea of communion between God and man

Communion refers to the belief that there is an unbroken intercourse between the world of God and the world of humanity. The righteous man is in constant communion with God, even in his worldly affairs, since he also feels God's presence in that sphere (Wikipedia, 2007).

### **Terms are interchangeable**

I first approached a Jewish Rabbi (through an Ask The Rabbi section of a Chassidic website) with the question: Are the soul and the spirit two different concepts, or are they the same? A Rabbi replied that he could not really answer the question, as it depended on the context it was written in. He stated that **in general these two terms are often interchanged**, and one could be referring to the other. However, there are five different dimensions to the soul in their understanding, and these terms could be referring to two of them (Ask the Rabbi, 23/04/2007). I was only able to clarify this fivefold context through further literature study.

### **Part of God**

Answering a question by someone on how we know that we have a soul (sic), a Rabbi answered on the same website that man is the composite of a soul and a body. The soul is the 'me' that has the body (which is the exact opposite of popular Charismatic teaching). The soul is a part of God which descends to earth by the will of God to

vitalize the human being, enabling him to fulfil the purpose for which he is created (Freeman, 2001-2007).

Another Rabbi commented that the human soul is both the most complex and the loftiest of souls. It is not just the engine of life, but embodies the why of something's existence; its meaning and purpose. It is therefore the 'inner identity' (Tauber, 2001-2007). This does not seem to contradict Genesis 2:7.

### **Five names of the soul**

Through a number of different sources I then learned that the ancient Hebrew sages had said that the soul is called by five names. (The sages were wise men and teachers, and in his time Jesus of Nazareth was also regarded as one – that is why He was often addressed as Teacher, Rabboni, etc.):

- *Nefesh* (or *nephesh*, which is mostly translated 'soul' in our Bible versions) – the engine of physical life.
- *Ruach* (mostly translated 'spirit') – the emotional self and 'personality'. It contains the moral virtues and the ability to distinguish between good and evil.
- *Neshamah* (breath) – the intellectual self or 'super soul' which separates man from all other life forms. This part is provided at birth and is that part which allows man to have a measure of awareness of God's existence and presence.
- *Chaya* (life) – the supra-rational self, or seat of will, desire, commitment and faith, which also allows one to have an awareness of the divine life force itself.
- *Yechidah* (singularity) – the essence of the soul; its unity with its source; the singular essence of God. Here one can achieve as full a union with God as possible.

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**It is only in the human soul that God imparted of His own essence.**

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This *yechida*, or the essence of the soul of man is then literally considered as a part of God above, a piece of God in us, and it is this part of the soul that is driven to connect with its Source. It is only in the human soul that God imparted of His own essence (Tauber, 2001-2007).

Note that the first three expressions or names are all found in the biblical text. Because I could not find them, and in view of Paul's warning in 1 Corinthians 4:6 about reading beyond what is written, I approached a Rabbi in order to gain some clarity on the foundations of the last two concepts. He confirmed that they come from the Midrash, which are basically commentaries of the Tanakh (the Jewish Bible) by ancient sages. They are therefore not in the Bible and I would consequently exercise extreme caution in the weight I give them in my knowledge base. Jesus of Nazareth is not on record as having taught such a fivefold view.

The remark that it is only in the human soul God imparted (by breathing) of His own essence takes on more clarity if we note the word (*nephesh*) which we have now learned is usually translated with 'soul' in the English, is used for the first time in Genesis 1:20. However, there it refers to swarms of minute creatures in the waters. It is the word *neshamah* (e.g. Prov 20:27) that adds the higher dimension to the human being.

## A THREE PART VIEW

### God's innermost Essence

Others within the Jewish community present a simpler view than that of the Chassidic teaching above. One of the foundations of Jewish faith is the belief in an immortal soul and life after death. According to them, no details are mentioned in the Torah since God's revelation deals only with the present world. That is why the prophet Isaiah says of the World to Come, "*Never has the ear heard it – no eye has seen it – other than God*" (Isaiah 64:4).

In addition to his material self, they state that man's soul is unique among all of God's creations. The Torah (in Gen 2:7) teaches that the human soul came directly from God's innermost Essence as He breathed into the man He formed out of the dust of the ground, a soul-breath of life (*nishmat chaim*). Thus man became a living creature (*nefesh chaya*). It is interesting to note that the creation account of Genesis 1 does not teach that God breathed a soul-breath of life (*nishmat chaim*) into animals.

### Three parts

As noted above, some within the Jewish community see the human soul as consisting of three parts – and those are the three mentioned in the Bible:

- *Nefesh*, which is from the root *nafash*, meaning ‘rest’.
- *Ruach*, which they define as ‘wind’.
- *Neshamah*, which literally means ‘breath’.

They explain that “*God’s exhaling a soul can be compared to a glass-blower forming a vessel. The breath (neshamah) first leaves his lips, travels as a wind (ruach) and finally comes to rest (nefesh) in the vessel. Of these three levels of the soul, neshamah is therefore the highest and closest to God, while nefesh is that aspect residing in the body. Ruach stands between the two, binding man to his spiritual Source. It is for this reason that the Divine Inspiration is called Ruach HaKodesh in Hebrew*” (Kaplan, 2007).

This view might seem to have some similarities with the modern trichotomist (threefold) view of the human constitutional nature, but there is a clear distinction between them. Here it refers to the immaterial part of the human only without inclusion of the body. The modern threefold view commonly differentiates between spirit, soul and body. This view is discussed at length in the next chapter. It is also illustrates that the clinical division made by the modern threefold view of some Christians is impossible, for the above description shows one unit with three undividable dimensions only. There is simply no way the three described above can be isolated from each other. I make this remark because I recently viewed televised teachings declaring how man’s soul and spirit went (or could go) two separate ways when he died. I also recall reading somewhere the statement that when the human died, his soul also died, while the spirit returned to God.

This last statement stands against, for example, Acts 20:10. The young man fell from the window while Paul was speaking, “(...) *and was taken up [meaning ‘removed’] dead.*” Then Paul laid on him or held him, and said that his life [the Greek *psuche* or soul] is in him. There is no Biblical substance for a view such as the abovementioned one of the soul and spirit going separate ways, without adding something beyond what is written.

The third century ‘church father’ Tertullian stated that whenever the question is about soul and spirit, then the soul will be understood to be itself the spirit, just as the day is light itself. After all, a thing is itself identical with that by means of which itself exists (Tertullian, in Schaff, 1885).

### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

You may either feel at this stage that you see where I’m going, or perhaps you may feel confused. However, please have patience and don’t let your mind run ahead. I have just been giving important foundational knowledge against which we will be able to build a sound understanding. There are just so many different doctrines around in the Christian world on the soul-spirit concepts, that it is important to make sure we have an unpolluted biblical understanding.

In the end you may even feel that you cannot agree with my understanding, but then you would at least have worked through the maze of different understandings that all of us are confronted with in the modern Christian environment (let alone the world of secular psychology), and you can then make an informed decision on what you see as the true biblical position.

Remember, we have to unravel a nest of doctrines that I feel have been over-spiritualised and complicated beyond what was ever intended. What I have most certainly learned myself is that it is easier said than done in view of the great variety of interpretations and opinions. And of course, as several of our dear friends have put it, what we teach often requires people to confront the security of many years’ learning in the process. Then I realise just how traditions and its doctrines have been set in concrete through many years of repetition.

In the following chapter I focus on the popular doctrine of the human as a threefold being, composed of spirit, soul and body. To set the scene for proper weighing of these doctrinal statements against the original Hebraic understanding and usage, consider the following description by Vine, Unger and White before we move on (1996: 238):

The Hebrew system of thought does not include the combination or opposition of the terms ‘body’ and ‘soul,’ which are really Greek and Latin in origin. The Hebrew contrasts two other concepts which are not found in the Greek and Latin tradition: ‘the



inner self” and “the outer appearance” or, as viewed in a different context, “what one is to oneself” as opposed to “what one appears to be to one’s observers.” The inner person is *nepeš*, while the outer person or reputation, is *šēm*, most commonly translated ‘name’.

Paul was certainly in harmony with this when he wrote to the Ephesians that he was praying for them to be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit in the inner man. His prayer continued that the Messiah might dwell in their hearts through faith, and it carries the same meaning.

Vine, Unger and White point out that different Bible versions vary widely in their readings of *nepeš*. The more contemporary versions seemingly cast their net widely for meanings.

# THE THREEFOLD VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE

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*“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I (pray God) your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23).*

*“For the word of God (is) quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and (is) a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb 4:12; KJV).*

## INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

### Contemporary popularity

Although a prominent theological textbook noted in 1992 that the threefold view of the human had by then become popular in Protestant circles (Erickson, 1992: 71), a survey of contemporary books in Christian bookstores today will reveal that this popularity has probably extended more specifically across the fields of the Pentecostal and Charismatic folds than the more conservative groups in the Protestant family. The content of Christian television programs will no doubt lead one to a similar conclusion.

### Seemingly easy explanations

The continually increasing number of books dealing with emotional healing and deliverance have found in the idea that the human is a spirit, has a soul and lives in a body a seemingly logical and uncom-

plicated basis for the explanation of many difficult concepts and situations believers are faced with. In his discussion of the demonization of the believer Charles Kraft (2002: 35, 67), for example, proposes that:

A demon cannot live in the Christian's spirit – that is, the person's central core, the part that died when Adam sinned, [sic] because Jesus now lives there. Demons can, however, live in the other parts, just as sin can.

I conclude, therefore, that demons cannot live in the innermost part of Christians, their spirit, since it is joined to and filled with the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:16). That part of Christians becomes alive with the life of Christ and is inviolable by representatives of the Enemy. Demons can, however, live in a Christian's mind, emotions, body, and will [therefore, in a person's soul according to the typical threefold view that the soul comprises the mind, emotions and intellect or will - author's note].

I have to agree that on face value it seems to make sense and I held this view for a considerable time. However, face value and biblical terminology in itself do not necessarily constitute the truth.

The unidentified author of an article *The Soul Versus The Spirit* on the Internet writes that many find it hard to believe the reality that a 'born again believer' (which is another concept that is unfortunately used in confusion today) can have a demonic spirit simply because they don't understand the difference between the soul and the spirit of the human (Greatbiblestudy.com, 2007).

### **Andrew Wommack's view**

Television personality Andrew Wommack, as one of the well-known persons in the group who teach a threefold nature of man, believes that the Bible clearly teaches humans are three-part beings. According to him most Christians believe this intellectually, but are confused about the operation of the soul and spirit and regard them as the same thing. He states that even the Strong's Concordance fails to distinguish correctly between spirit and soul (Wommack, 1997-2007).

## **Dr. Lehman Strauss**

Bible.org is a non-profit Christian ministry headquartered in Dallas, Texas. According to their website, this ministry has grown in the last decade to serve millions of people and ministries around the world by providing thousands of trustworthy resources for Bible study, including a new translation of the Bible (the New English Translation or NET Bible). The Vision and Mission of Bible.org are to leverage the power of the Internet to deliver the Word of God and trustworthy Bible study resources to people, churches and ministries around the world for free access by all. They purpose to help equip the front lines of ministry in the 21st Century for eternally significant purposes (Austin, 2011).

One of the writers of whom considerable material has been published on the Bible.org website is a respected scholar, Dr. Lehman Strauss, who taught Old Testament history for eight years at Philadelphia Bible Institute, and served as pastor from 1939 to 1963. He then devoted his full time to an itinerant Bible conference and evangelistic ministry both in the United States and abroad. Dr. Strauss was writing his 19th book at age 86 when he passed away in June 1997.

His view was that the Christian doctrine of immortality cannot be understood apart from the right understanding of the threefold nature of men. According to this understanding, the human is a triune being because he is created in the image of God. This ‘trinity’ of man is an essential part of the image relationship between him and God. In Strauss’s thinking the twofold view of the human, that man consists of only two component parts, namely body and soul, is a view that might create confusion in the minds of many Christians (Strauss, 2007).

Despite all their statements of the Bible’s clarity on the issue of the threefold view of humans, the writings of the adherents of this view display considerable differences of opinion or understanding and they fall into confusing applications of concepts among themselves at times. Their sincere attempts simply have not been able to overcome the reality that the Bible does not give any detailed description or explanation of the composition and characteristics of soul and/or spirit.

Consider Leviticus 17:11 by way of illustration: *“For the life of the flesh (is) in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it (is) the blood (maketh) atonement for the soul”* (KJV).

### **Varied translation of *nephesh***

The three words used in the abovementioned text, ‘life’, ‘souls’ and ‘soul’ are all the word *nephesh* in the Hebrew text. Six other versions of this verse read as follows:

For the life [the animal soul] is in the blood, and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life [which it represents] (Amplified Bible).

For the life of any creature is in its blood. I have given you the blood so you can make atonement for your sins. It is the blood, representing life, that brings you atonement (NLT).

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your lives, for it is the blood that makes atonement for the life (The Scriptures Version).

For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you for performing the rite of expiation on the altar of your lives, for blood is what expiates for a life (NJB).

For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves; for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life (CJB).

For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life (JPS).

There is, based on this verse, strong indication that soul = life = the very being of the human. I will give more attention to the explanations of a number of dictionaries and word studies later, but I find a similar conclusion, for example, in William Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (2006:670-671). Vine, Unger and White (1996: 237-238), refer specifically to the above verse and state that the reading of ‘soul’, as some do, is meaningless in such a text. The Hebraic view certainly leans toward the use of ‘life’ in this instance.

## THE THREEFOLD UNDERSTANDING'S FOUNDATIONAL SCRIPTURES

### Based on two verses

Those who follow the threefold understanding of the human's make up start out from the following two verses in the New Testament, and from here they then move to and fro between Old and New Testament Scriptures in order to string together a body of 'truth':

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I (pray God) your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:23).

For the word of God (is) quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and (is) a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb 4:12; KJV).

### Flawed reasoning of Strauss and Watchman Nee

Dr. Lehman Strauss, for example, declares that these verses clearly establish the fact that man is a triune being composed of spirit, soul, and body. All the writers in this fold make the point in some way or another that these two verses make a distinct and clear difference between the soul and spirit.

Watchman Nee (1968: 1), who wrote a number of popular books in the previous century, and whose teachings are still highly regarded in much of the Church today, writes in very strong terms that the Bible never confuses the spirit and soul, as though they were the same thing. According to him, they are not only different terms, but their very natures are different from each other.

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**Writers in the trichotomist fold all state that 1 Thess 5:23 and Heb 4:12 make a distinct and clear difference between soul and spirit.**

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Since the Word of God then supposedly distinguishes the human spirit from the human soul in 1 Thess. 5:23 and Heb. 4:12, Nee concludes that man is composed of three parts: spirit, soul, and body. This is also the order in which he sees the Word of God presenting them: the spirit

is then the most important or pre-eminent part and the body the lowest.

He neglects, however, to point out that if his line of reasoning is correct, then Hebrews 4:12 also identifies the heart as a separate entity. To try and incorporate the concept of the heart in a different way than the other two (spirit and soul) would clearly establish or follow an inconsistent pattern of reasoning or interpretation.

### **Foundation of 0,39% of relevant applications**

A number of problems arise from the above foundational position:

One should note that one or both terms soul and spirit are found in 512 verses (562 individual instances) of the King James Version of the Bible. This means that the followers of the threefold view build their doctrine on a foundation that represents only 0,39% of the application of the specific concepts in the Bible. Although this does not in itself render something untrue, it certainly calls for caution in order to present reliable explanation or interpretation. They then go on to make all other applications of Scripture on the conclusion that these two verses are clear and sufficient evidence for the threefold composition of the human. Add to this the fact that the ancient Hebrew word *nephesh* is translated to at least 28 very different words in the KJV, as I pointed out before, then certainly the need for extreme caution is amplified.

### **Scripture is the primary interpreter of Scripture**

One of the basic principles of Bible interpretation is that Scripture is used to interpret Scripture. Therefore, one needs to look for similar principles in other parts of the Bible. Consider the following in this specific regard:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength (Deut 6:5, NKJV).

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength (Matt 22:37, NKJV).

Although Jesus was presenting the content of Deuteronomy 6:5 to his audience in Matthew 22:37, He added the concept of the mind to it.

Both verses also distinguish the heart as a separate entity, but none refer to the spirit! What is important, however, is that these two verses show different parts to those in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. They are used to conclude that Moses and Jesus were simply saying the people were to love God with their whole being. My conclusion is confirmed by verse 39: *“You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”*

### **Various views on Heb. 4:12**

As far as Hebrews 4:12 is concerned, commentaries and notes of Study Bible versions are, as can be expected, also divided along the lines of the writers’ position on the threefold doctrine. If we consider word studies and dictionaries, there seems to be a more cautious approach, although some are seemingly trying to accommodate all viewpoints and consequently fail to present a clear picture (they present a picture of compromise).

Vine, Unger and White (1996: 589), for example, concludes that soul and spirit are alike in their nature and activities, but the spirit is taken to be the higher and soul the lower element. The spirit then seems to be the life principle God bestowed on man, while the soul is the resulting life of the individual.

Unfortunately, this does not properly explain how they arrived at this conclusion (note that they use the verb ‘seems’), especially if one discovers that there are verses in the Bible in which animals have a ‘spirit’ if we fail to correctly divide the word of truth (Gen 7:21-22. See also Ps 104:24-29). However, I notice a measure of similarity between Vine, Unger and White’s view and the three-part Hebraic view I described in the previous chapter.

### **Vincent & Robertson**

Because all the soul-spirit dividing views are rooted in so much assumption and reading beyond what is written in Scripture (against which Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 4:6), I find the contributions of Vincent’s Word Studies and Robertson’s Word Pictures responsible and from a scholarly viewpoint also unbiased. Vincent states that *“(...) it is useless to attempt to draw from the words of 1 Thessalonians a technical, psychological statement of a threefold division of the human personality. If Paul recognized any such technical division, it was more probably twofold; the body or material part and the immaterial*



*part with its higher and lower sides.*” Of Hebrews 4:12 he writes that soul and spirit cannot be construed to be separated, and joints and marrow are not in contact with each other.

The verb dividing (*merismos*) indicates the act of division, not a point or line of division. This form or expression is poetical and signifies that God’s Word penetrates to the innermost recesses of the human’s spiritual being (his immaterial life essence – which I deal with later in my discussion of the expression spiritual) (Vincent, e-Sword). It does not describe the separation of one part from another, but that the Word of God operates in every aspect of the human’s spiritual nature. The idea of division here is in the sense of judging or sifting out.

### **Humans an undivided whole**

Robertson declares about 1 Thessalonians 5:23 that the reference to spirit and soul and body does not necessarily support a threefold view as opposed to the twofold picture found elsewhere in Paul’s Epistles. All people have an inner man (soul, mind, heart, inward man) and the outer man. The singular verb and singular adjective indicate Paul understands the human to be an undivided whole. He takes up a similar stance in respect of Hebrews 4:12 and points out quite correctly that the surgeon goes into and through the joints and marrow, but does not cleave between them (Robertson, e-Sword). Please carefully read again Vine, Unger and White’s explanation that I quoted in concluding the previous chapter.

### **Joints and marrow, not bone and marrow**

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**Hebrews 4:12 does not refer to a division between bone and marrow.**

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As to the joints and marrow, I wish to note that I was taught at some stage many years back (and I willingly believed my teacher) with the assistance of a cross-section drawing of a bone and its marrow on the inside, how deep the penetration described in Hebrews 4:12 actually was. The teacher proclaimed that one could not clearly identify the division between bone and marrow; that the marrow actually merges into the bone. Today I realise that bone and marrow was not the picture used in this verse at all and shows how easily one can be misled by someone teaching with true, yet unfortunately misguided sincerity and applica-

tion of ‘biblical terminology’. Others I have spoken to have held this same misguided belief.

### **Paul’s respect for Jewish concepts**

John Gill (e-Sword) notes in his commentary that Paul seems to express respect for the several names by which the soul of man is called by the Jews (soul, spirit, and breath). *“Some by the soul understand the natural and unregenerate part in man, and by spirit the renewed and regenerate part (...) others think the soul designs the inferior faculties, the affections; and the spirit the superior ones, the mind and understanding.”* He concludes, however, that the apostle is indicating that, whereas the soul and spirit are indivisible, and the joints and marrow covered and hidden, so penetrating is God’s Word that it reaches the most secret and hidden things of man.

If we consider the earlier scriptural examples of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37, Gill’s conclusion certainly demands serious thought.

But don’t other Scriptures also differentiate between soul and spirit? As I noted before, after they declare on the basis of 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12 that man is a threefold being, followers of this doctrine move to and fro between Old and New Testament Scriptures which are then manipulated or strung together on that knowledge base. I discuss a number of these ‘other Scriptures that differentiate’ in the chapter on the twofold view of man and show that they, in fact, present the two concepts as the same and not as two different ones.

## **COMPOSITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE THREEFOLD MAN**

### **Consider the differences**

From the position that man is a threefold being, the popular doctrine then goes on to give an explanation of the detailed composition of each part. I must point out that I deal here with typical viewpoints, and as you will see, there are considerable and important differences of opinion among the followers of this view. I think it is important not just to ignore those teachings or doctrines I do not agree with, but to consider them and allow them to challenge me to thoroughly study their interpretations against the Scriptures. At the same time, it would help me answer their interpretations. The foundational apostles of

Christ Jesus followed a similar approach when they met with ‘new-comers’ Paul and Barnabas, if we are to believe Galatians 2:1-9.

### **Clarence Larkin’s chart**

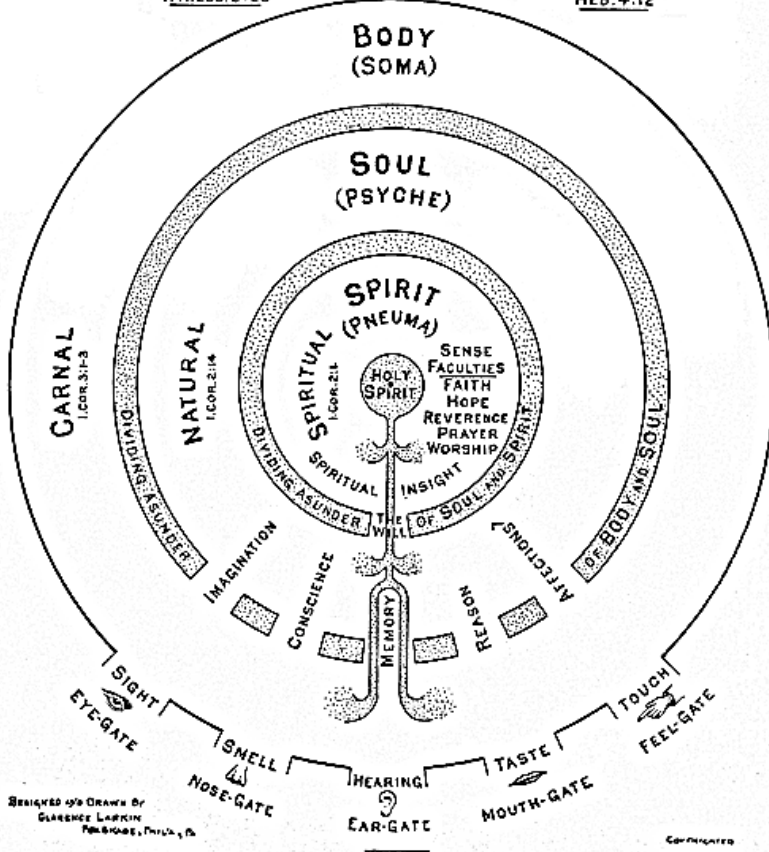
Clarence Larkin, who published a number of books about biblical studies in the 1910’s and 1920’s, is perhaps best known for the charts he compiled to explain his doctrines. He tried to present all three parts of the human according to the threefold doctrine in a single chart.

Note that his chart is founded primarily on the two foundational verses used by the followers of the threefold view. Furthermore, note the absence of any Old Testament references, of Scripture references for the detail he ascribes to, as well as Scripture references for the detail he ascribes to each of the three composite parts. Also note the absence of *pnœ* (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *neshamah*):

# THE THREEFOLD NATURE OF MAN

1. THESS. 5:23

HEB. 4:12



**Figure 1: Clarence Larkin’s threefold nature of the human**

Those who hold to the belief that this threefold nature of man is the Biblical position, then take up a number of important positions to build their doctrine (or variations of the typical doctrine). Let us now look at what I consider to be the core statements or positions of this group. Once again, remember that I am using a representative example, for it would be impossible to study all of their teachings and variations in this regard.

## DID MAN'S SPIRIT DIE WHEN ADAM SINNED?

### Key statement

A key statement you will find throughout the teachings of this group is that the spirit of the human died (or at least became dormant) when Adam and Eve sinned. This spirit is then resurrected when a person believes on the Lord Jesus Christ (or becomes 'born again' - a concept which is in itself the subject of various doctrines). If that were true, statements such as those I discuss next would mean the unbeliever or even 'unborn' Christian had no conscience, intuition, or ability to fellowship in the spiritual realm. Because this is simply not true, some writers then fall into the trap of trying to explain that the spirit of the unbeliever or 'unborn' Christian is open only to the things of man. Any person who is or had been involved in the occult would laugh at such a suggestion.

### Assumption based on Gen. 2:17

(...) but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Gen 2:17, NKJV).

This widely held position that the spirit of the human died when Adam sinned is obviously an assumption derived from the fact that he continued to live to the age of 930 years after his original sin. This assumption may be fuelled by Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 15:45:

The first Adam was made a living soul [*psuche*]; the last Adam a quickening [life-giving] spirit [*pneuma*] (KJV).

There is, however, no indication of a spiritual death in the above or any other verses of the Bible.

Adam was never prohibited in the beginning to eat from the tree of life, which would give him everlasting life. In fact, it was only in Genesis 3:22 when the Lord God sent the humans from the garden that He indicated it was done so that they could not eat from the tree of life and live forever. I wonder how many times I have read this verse without any real comprehension of what it said.

## **Biblical figures who heard God's voice**

Abraham, for example, who was a member of a pagan family at the time when God called him, certainly heard the Lord's voice. This would have been questionable had his spirit been dead. The 'dead spirit' understanding unavoidably applies to Enoch, Noah, Moses, and many others.

Then Yahweh God said, 'Now that the man has become like us in knowing good from evil, he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and pick from the tree of life too, and eat and live forever!' So Yahweh God expelled him from the garden of Eden, to till the soil from which he had been taken. He banished the man, and in front of the garden of Eden he posted the great winged creatures and the fiery flashing sword, to guard the way to the tree of life (Gen 3:22-24, NJB).

## **Ancient Hebraic understanding**

I tested my understanding with a Jewish Rabbi by asking: "*God said to Adam that he would surely die the day he ate of the forbidden tree (Genesis 2:17). Yet Adam ate and although it was not without dire consequences, he did not die that day and lived to 930 years before he died. How should I understand this seeming contradiction, please?*"

The Rabbi replied that the classic Jewish commentators offered various solutions to this problem:

- One explanation was similar to my own understanding as indicated above.
- Other commentators explained that the 'day' mentioned in Genesis 2:17 referred to a day of God, which is equal to a thousand years and that had Adam not sinned, he would in fact have lived forever.
- A third opinion was that Adam would have died regardless, but now he would die as a punishment instead of a natural death (Chabad.org).

It is clear that the Scriptures do not contain any statement pertaining to the death of the human spirit and that the whole notion rests on unfortunate assumption. This is in itself no different from the Jewish tradi-

tion of building fences around the Torah, a practice which Jesus sternly criticised and rejected in a conversation with the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 15: 6-9), but which continues even today.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SOUL AND SPIRIT**

### **Different views and detail**

The different writers all try to present a detailed description of the soul's composition, but in the process, they end up producing significant and confusing differences, for example:

- The soul is the will, intellect and emotions (Van der Merwe, 1998).
- The soul is the human's personality and reflects the emotions and actions, while the spirit reflects the conscience (Dawson, 1998).
- The spirit of man is his personality (Strauss, 2007).

Strauss and Dawson, therefore, have directly opposing explanations. To Dawson the soul is the personality, and to Strauss the spirit is the personality.

Let us now consider a number of views and explanations of Christians who teach the threefold constitutional nature of man.

### **Soul is not directed towards God?**

Strauss (2007) describes the soul as the seat of the passions, feelings and desires of man. Here the fleshly lusts, desires and appetites arise and these are never directed toward God until the spirit has become regenerated. Because many people are not regenerated they get no substance from their regular reading of the Bible and attending church (Strauss, 2007).

It is standard procedure in many churches to 'lead people to the Lord' – indicating that they are led to pray the so-called sinner's prayer, after which they are informed they have been 'born again'. I cannot help but wonder if such a 'rebirth' would then not include regeneration? Strauss' statement above is truly sharp criticism against the church in itself, even if it was unintentional.

## **Soul and spirit separate when man dies?**

Dawson (1998) states that the soul is totally unique and a spirit; and the spirit is from God, righteous. When man dies, the soul and spirit enter paradise with Christ. If one is a believer, the soul and spirit **become one at a later stage**, which is probably the wedding feast of the Lamb. What a statement! There is absolutely no Biblical support for this assumption.

Note that with this argument Dawson is trying beyond any doubt to provide a solution for the self-imposed challenge of separate destinies of soul and spirit that verses such as the following pose:

Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit [*rûach*] will return to God who gave it (Eccl 12:7). [Note that there is no mention of a separate soul].

And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls [*psuchē*] of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God (...) (Rev 20:4, NKJV).

John writes in the book of Revelation (6:9; 20:4) that he saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for their testimony. Then, in 6:11, he notes that white robes were given to these souls. White robes are a symbol of righteousness, and the context indicates that ‘souls’ refer to a wholeness of beings, not only part.

## **What happened to Jesus’ soul on the cross?**

It is important to note that when Jesus died on the cross, He “(...) *cried out with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit*” (Matt 27:50). Mark 15:37 renders the same incident as “*And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.*” Luke’s rendition (23:46) is, “*And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having said this, He breathed His last.*” According to John 19:30 “(...) *He said, ‘it is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.*” Nothing is said of Jesus’ soul, which causes a vacuum in the threefold position. There can be no doubt that this question will be simply circumvented by reference to the Christ’s deity.



Robertson and Vincent both quote Augustine's explanation that Jesus gave up His life. According to Gill the basic meaning is that Jesus breathed out His life (e-Sword)!

In the following chapter on other views of the human nature I also discuss the biblical references to the soul of God.

### **Dangers of doctrine not rooted in Scripture**

Dawson's solution for the apparent separate destinies of soul and spirit when a person dies is not founded on Scripture, but relies purely on a personal suggestion. He does not say what happens to the soul and spirit of an unbeliever. This conclusion is very confusing and his further reference to the corruptible that shall have put on incorruption, with death swallowed up in victory (1 Cor 15:53, 54) is a loose add-on that makes no Scriptural contribution to such a conclusion. It must be said in his favour that most other adherents of the threefold view seemingly hesitate to address this problem. I have already mentioned earlier a teaching on a prominent television channel in which the minister explained how at death the body is buried, while the soul and spirit may go to different/separate destinies. This is the danger of the threefold view – because their definitions of soul and spirit are not rooted and grounded in sound Scripture interpretation, it can lead to all sorts of questionable doctrinal application.

Note, too, that Dawson states the soul is a spirit (therefore an invisible life essence which is correct). This soul-spirit is from God, he says, and it is righteous! With his reference to soul and spirit entering paradise Dawson is caught between an Old Testament concept on the one hand and a New Testament wedding feast on the other.

### **Assumption following reading above what is written**

This understanding of different destinies of soul and spirit as two separate entities is probably rooted in the combined reading of Ecclesiastes 12:7 and Matthew 10:28:

Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it (Eccl. 12:7).

Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt 10:28).

The word translated ‘hell’ is the Greek *geenna* (*gehennah*) which denoted a place or state of everlasting punishment. The spirit is not mentioned separately and Jesus is clearly referring to the whole person. To separate ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ into two different entities that go to different destinies is assumption based on reading above what is written.

Did you notice that Dawson states that man’s soul is a spirit? And also that this spirit (the soul) is not only from God, but is righteous too? This in itself refutes the many allegations of man’s ‘soulishness’ as a negative root.

I make this point that you may keep it in mind every time you see how authors and preachers make out the soul to be something that is inherently, and even always, bad. Watchman Nee (1968) wrote that when God created man, He breathed the breath of life into his nostrils. As this breath of life came into contact with man’s body, the soul was produced. The soul is therefore, the combination of the human body and his spirit. This does not merely imply that the combination of spirit and body produced the soul; it also shows that spirit and body became completely merged in the soul. In other words, the soul and body were combined with the spirit, and the spirit and body were merged in the soul.

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**In view of the negative position of the soul in trichotomy, one can be moved to ask: Did God have bad breath when He breathed the breath of life into man?**

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Careful reading of these statements clearly reveals a confusing state of mind and strange reasoning that is not based on a clear Scriptural foundation. In other words, it is a newly created ‘truth’, so to speak. Watchman Nee’s reasoning actually states that the spirit and body became part of the soul, although that is probably opposite to what he intended to describe. It most definitely speaks against the human as **being a spirit** and **having a soul**, which is foundational to the three-fold view. Alternatively, could it perhaps be an error by the translator of Nee’s work? Nee also stated that the soul decided whether the spiritual or natural world would reign. To illustrate that the spirit cannot act upon the body by itself, Nee refers to Luke 1:46, 47:

And Mary said: My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior (NKJV).

According to Nee the changing tense shows that the spirit first conceived joy in God, and then, communicating with the soul, caused it to give expression to that feeling by means of the body. This then supposedly clearly shows that the soul decides whether the spiritual or natural world would reign. What utter confusion this pattern of circular reasoning reflects! Sadly, this picture of two separate entities in which the bad one, the soul, dominates the good one, the spirit, is a common one in emotional healing and deliverance literature and teaching (see, for example, Rebecca Brown's book, *Prepare For War*, 1992).

I have explained several times that one finds some distinct characteristics within the Hebrew language. One of these is called synonymous parallelism – which simply implies that the same idea is given twice, but in different words (Bivin & Blizzard, 1994: 89). Hebrew rejects repeating the same noun in both halves of a poetic line (Vine, Unger & White, 1996: 238). The Bible is full of this, and I will deal some more with important examples of its application to the soul-spirit connection in the next chapter. However, the acknowledgement that this too, is such an example would of course not promote the threefold view of the human nature. Note also that Nee turns the sequence in which the expressions soul (first) and spirit (second) is used, around. This definitely does not reflect a picture of rightly dividing the word of truth.

**Before the fall of man the spirit controlled his whole being through the soul (Nee, 1968).**

This statement flows almost naturally from the foregoing position – but of course it also demonstrates the belief that the human spirit died when Adam sinned. Nee does not (because he cannot) provide sound scriptural foundation for this 'factual' statement.

**Crushing the soul life?**

According to Nee (1968) there is an ongoing war that is waged secretly within the Christian between soul and spirit. The 'soul life' needs to be crushed, and its authority persistently denied. If this soul life is not stripped away through death (being unconditionally laid in in the dust), believers shall continue in defeat. (The expression 'soul life' that Nee creates, this regard, would have to be *nephesh nephesh* in Hebrew, or *psyche psyche* in Greek). Nee then states that the Holy

Spirit teaches the believer in Hebrews 4:12 how to divide spirit and soul experientially. *“The dividing of these two is not a mere doctrine but a must in the believer’s life (...) The dividing of these two denotes additionally that through willing cooperation the child of God can follow a pure spiritual path unimpeded by the soul (...) The Word of God plunges into the soul as well as into the spirit in order to effect the division of these two.”*

The approach or idea of crushing the ‘soul life’ and stripping it away is clearly at variance with the account of the creation of the human (Genesis 2:7; Leviticus 17:11) that man is created as a living soul, or that the life – which is also the word *nephesh* - is in the blood. It is also difficult to reconcile this statement of Nee with his own view that man’s soul was something unique to God. I cannot understand how man would continue to exist if his ‘soul life’ (which is his whole life essence) could be put to death? There is no Scriptural foundation for such a statement. The Psalmist’s cry in Psalm 51:10 is for God to create in him a clean heart (or pure soul), not that God should strip away or crush his ‘soul life’. Please note again that in the ancient Hebraic thought ‘soul’ and ‘life’ really constituted one and the same. Nee tries to present the translation of *nephesh* as ‘life’, as error by people who do not understand what the soul is.

The above is a good description of the many teachings today of the soul as the altogether bad part of our makeup. Just recently, I watched the body language of a preacher on television as he taught on his threefold version the spirit-soul concept. Every reference to the negative in the human life was based on so-called ‘soulish’ action, and every mention of that expression was accompanied by a gesture of both index fingers to his temples – indicating the seat of his mind, will and emotions. (And just as often one sees preachers holding their belly when they speak of the spirit of man – and this too is based on wrong translation/interpretation of the Hebrew and Greek terms. I also deal with this concept in a later chapter). Just as a matter of interest, Psalm 7:9 implies the kidneys as the seat of emotions. Revelation 2:23 places the mind in the kidneys. Bear in mind that it is part of the personification of abstract concepts and not an indication of physiological or ‘spiritual’ reality.

## **Protecting God?**

Joseph Alvarez (2007) describes the human spirit as a protective womb for the presence and the motions of the Holy Spirit of God within us. According to Alvarez, it is impossible for God to dwell in our souls. One of the reasons he provides is that our souls are open to demonic attack and deception. Consequently, God had to create an organ within us, which is not affected by our emotions or intellect, and that is our human spirit.

By stating that it is impossible for God to dwell in the human soul, Alvarez is in fact disagreeing with God that nothing is impossible for Him (Gen 18:14). By proposing that a reason for such a position is that the soul is open to demonic attack, he is also portraying the Holy Spirit of God as vulnerable to demonic powers. It actually takes away all thought of power vested in the believer by the Holy Spirit to drive out demons. Instead of the Holy Spirit empowering the believer against any evil forces, it is now the Holy Spirit who is in need of protection! Whereas the body is often portrayed as the lowest element in the human makeup, it is interesting that Paul describes it as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). And even if this is to be understood figuratively, it cannot be divorced from the soul.

When Eli accuses Hannah of being drunk (1 Sam 1:15), she replies that she is not; she is only a woman of sorrowful spirit. Sorrow is most certainly an emotion, and here it is portrayed to be affecting Hannah's spirit. According to Alvarez's reasoning that God created the human spirit as an organ which is not affected by the emotions, these are contradictions and show once again how easily one falls into error if you read or reason beyond what is written in the Bible. (Please bear in mind that I reflect the term 'spirit' here as Alvarez sees it - a separate entity from the soul).

## **Confusion of ideas**

Alvarez then states that a person's soul needs to submit itself continuously to the Holy Spirit, and if it succeeds it will take that person in the ways of the Lord. This means that the spirit has to become totally free from all impurity and bondage so that it stands out supreme. The Holy Spirit within us must be manifest enough to win the battle for the soul.

I must confess that I battle to understand the logic of this statement, considering that he sees the soul and spirit as two different entities. If the soul takes the action to submit to the Holy Spirit, then surely it is a spiritual action? Remember, that according to Alvarez the Holy Spirit is in the protective womb of the human spirit and not in the human soul, because that soul is vulnerable to demonic attack. In fact, he stated that it is impossible for God to dwell in the human soul. The reasoning we find here is once again proof that, once one moves into suppositions not found in the Scriptures you are bound to fall into error upon error.

### **‘Dead spirit’ is made alive?**

The human spirit is instantly reborn and made new (made alive) the moment one accepts Christ as Saviour, but the soul is not born again, according to an article on Great Bible Study.Com.

Any statement or implication that the human spirit is dead prior to being ‘born again’ stands against Scripture that states that the body without a spirit is dead (Jas 2:6). If then the spirit, which is supposedly a different entity from the soul is dead, James states that the body has to be dead too – unless one applies a good measure of spiritual philosophising to get around such an implication.

### **Soul is not saved?**

The soul is not saved, but only transformed to the degree that you renew your mind according to Andrew Wommack (1997-2007). He goes on to write that you need to change your attitudes and conform to the word of God (which I certainly agree with). Referring to 2 Corinthians 5:17, Wommack states that in your soul old things did not pass away, and that all things have not become new as it did in your spirit. Like a valve, the soul needs to be kept open to allow the life-giving power of the spirit to flow into your body. Then one will experience healing, deliverance, anointing, victory, power, joy, prosperity, and more. I am afraid that this is not found in 2 Corinthians 5:17 at all! Paul was writing about the adoption of a new attitude among those who believed that Jesus was the Christ.

## Over-spiritualising a text

Wommack's statement on 2 Corinthians 5:17 is based on an all too familiar over-spiritualisation of this text. Although it is best studied as part of an intensive study on Paul's 'in Christ' concept, I touch on it in the last chapter. His statement that the soul is not saved stands in direct contradiction of Scripture:

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls (James 1:21, NKJV).

The Scriptures Version of the Bible renders the same expression "(...) *which is able to save your lives.*" The Complete Jewish Bible uses the same expression, while the New Jerusalem Bible also renders the word souls, as does the Authorized King James Version. Once again, I understand it to mean your very being. Of course, one has to consider your understanding of the salvation described as well, as the Scriptures provide different manifestations of salvation or deliverance.

## The individual has a role in the process

The transformation and renewing of the mind is found in a number of Scriptures, e.g.:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom 12:2, NKJV).

(...) and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, let each one (...) (Eph 4:23-25, NKJV).

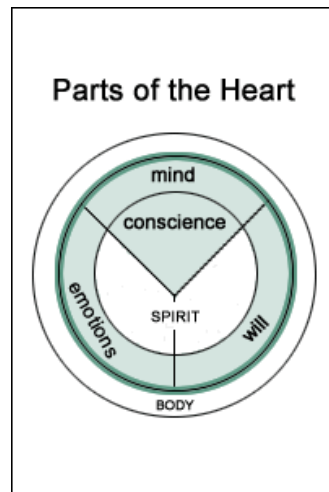
Clearly, the **transformation is something the individual has to purposefully focus on himself**. It is interesting, however, to see how the writers of commentaries and word studies struggle to explain the concept of 'the spirit of your mind' in Ephesians 4:23, as the combination of spirit and mind threatens the threefold doctrine's concept of the mind being part of the soul and not of the spirit. This is once more illustration of precisely what happens when a doctrine is built on so

many assumptions that cannot be soundly rooted in Scripture, as it is in the case of the threefold doctrine of the human constitution.

The ‘spirit of your mind’, read within the correct context, simply means the inclination, or focus, or attitude, or disposition of your mind-set. This understanding is supported by the fact that the individual has to purposefully transform his mind to the things of God. This is undoubtedly also the meaning of Philippians 2:5, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*” The Holman Christian Standard Bible accurately renders this verse, “*Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus.*”

### More confusing detail

Witness Lee’s interpretation of Romans 9:1, “*My conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit*” is that the conscience is the primary or leading part of the spirit. The heart is then presented as a composition of the soul and the conscience – in other words, the heart is made up of the conscience, mind, will and emotions. Several verses from Scripture are presented to explain that the mind (Gen 6:5 and Matt 9:4), the will (Acts 11:23 and Heb 4:12b), and the emotions (John 16:6) are part of the heart. Finally, Lee states that Scripture makes it clear that the conscience or leading part of the spirit, is also included in the heart of the human (Heb 10:22 and 1 John 3:20) (Lee, 2002).



Lee, as a follower of the threefold doctrine, unfortunately also does not explain the fact that Hebrews 4:12 mentions the heart apart from both the soul and the spirit. As I was writing the above paragraph in my doctoral thesis, a well known South African preacher stated on television that “*the spirit is also called the heart in Scripture.*” Of course this means that he too, missed or ignored the fact that Heb. 4:12 seemingly differentiates between the heart, soul and spirit. As I have noted before, such a clinical differentiation is a misinterpretation of the message of the complete human being that Hebrews 4:12 is



demonstrating, but I make these observations again to note the inconsistency in the interpretations of followers of the threefold teaching.

### THE DILEMMA OF ROMANS 7:13-25

#### Another example of reading above what is written

Paul's description in Romans 7:13-25 of the inner conflict he also experiences has been over-spiritualised to a large extent by some preachers and scholars who hold the threefold view of human nature. Craig Hill (1987), for example, explains that Paul is describing different parts of his being and on that basis Hill amplifies verses 15-20 as follows (Hill is simply used as an example, as others also apply a similar type of explanation):

For that which I, (**the soul**), am doing, I, (**the spirit**), do not understand; for I, (**the soul**), am not practicing what I (**the spirit**), would like to do but I, (**the soul**), do the very thing I, (**the spirit**), do not wish to do, I (**the spirit**), agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So no longer am I, (**the spirit**), the one doing it, but sin that indwells me, (**in my flesh**). For I, (**the spirit**), know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, (**the spirit and the soul together**), but the doing of the good, (in the soul), is not. For the good that I, (**the spirit and the soul together**), wish, I, (**the soul**), do not do; but I, (**the soul**), practice the very evil that I, (**the spirit and the soul together**), do not wish. But if I, (**the soul**), am doing the very thing I, (**the spirit and the soul together**), do not wish, I (**the spirit**), am no longer doing it, but sin which dwells in me, (**in my flesh**). [Based on the New American Standard Version; bold words are the author's].

What Paul is in reality describing here is a struggle between mind and flesh.

Hill underlines the fact that he is not saying that the person is absolved from responsibility when sin manifests in his or her life. Each one of us remains responsible for the choices we make and Hill uses Ezekiel 18:4 to accentuate this responsibility, which he unfortunately also spiritualises beyond its simple meanings:

The soul (not spirit) who sins will die (NAS).

In Paul's letter to the Romans, we see that he explains at length that we are saved by grace through Christ's death and no longer by observing the law. Chapter 7 deals specifically with the relationship between law and sin. Here Paul is using himself as an example to describe an inner struggle in which his mind wars against his flesh, which is manipulated by sin. Although he wants to do good, an evil inclination within him sometimes causes him to do things he hates. He ends in verse 25 with the declaration that he does not have in himself the ability to escape this sinful nature, but that deliverance is in Christ Jesus only. It has nothing to do with a war between two separate entities called soul and spirit, respectively.

### **Scripturally inaccurate**

While Hill's proposal seemingly clarifies what Paul is saying, it is scripturally inaccurate (and it confirms that he also sees the human as a threefold being, which draws a distinct line between soul and spirit – with the soul being the bad influence). Interestingly, Romans 7:25 ends with the statement that “So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin” (NKJV). The mind, which is one of the central constitutional parts of the soul according to the threefold teaching, is here clearly presented as the ‘spiritual’ part of the equation – that is, if one remains with Hill's amplification of Romans 7:13-25.

### **Unsound interpretation out of context**

His quotation of Ezekiel 18:4 from the New American Standard Version of the Bible further illustrates the importance of keeping Scripture within proper context. And it shows that using a single version of the translated Bible because it supports the view one is trying to put across, should also be avoided. The NAS uses the term ‘soul’ which Hill then purposefully contrasts with the absence of ‘spirit’ within that specific context. The New King James Version has a similar rendition, but the renditions by the New Jerusalem Bible, The Scriptures Version, and the Complete Jewish Bible provide another perspective:

The one who has sinned is the one to die (NJB).

The being that is sinning shall die (TS).

(...) - so it is the person who sins, himself, who must die (CJB).

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown's commentary on Ezekiel 18:4 confirm that the last three renditions provide a clearer understanding (e-Sword). It must also be noted that this verse in Ezekiel is written within the specific context of a curse that is passed down from father to son. To generalise it to other situations is not sound interpretation.

## **THE CONCEPT OF THE HEART**

### **Man's entire mental and moral activity**

Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (1996: 297) declares that the word heart is used to refer to man's entire mental and moral activity, and includes both the rational and the emotional elements. It is, however, also regarded as the sphere of Divine influence.

### **Relating to the soul?**

Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words states that the concept of heart (*leb*) in the Old Testament denotes the seat of emotion, desire, thought and decision – all facets which according to the threefold thinking of man's nature relate to the soul. Plans are made there, and it is the place where commitments are made, determined, kept or broken (2006:327). The Ancient Hebrew Research Center follows a similar explanation and points out that abstract thought in Hebrew is always expressed through concrete ideas. Thus, the ancient Hebrews understood the 'heart' as the seat of emotion, much like we associate the process of thinking with the brain (Ancient Hebrew Research Center, 2004).

Psalm 51:10 certainly supports this view:

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me (KJV).

The Psalmist is crying out for his life attitude to be cleansed; to be recreated. The ancient Aramaic idiom of creating a clean heart means, "*make me be to be born again; put out the error in exchange for the truth*", while the renewal of a right spirit means, "*grant me right thinking; right inclinations*" (Lamsa, 1985: 19).

In 1 Cor. 2:9 Paul quotes Is. 64:4, “*Eye has not seen, not ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*” In this context ‘heart’ is clearly synonymous with the common picture of the soul.

### **Hearts are hardened and evil**

God sometimes hardens hearts to accomplish His purposes (e.g. the heart of Pharaoh in Exodus 10). If the heart was then synonymous with spirit, as some would have it, it would indicate that God hardened the spirit of some men, for which I could not find direct or indirect Scriptural support. Remember, I am here using the term ‘spirit’ in the sense that followers of the threefold view would do, and that is a much higher level of ‘spirituality’ than that of their view of the soul.

The metaphorical use of the word *kardia* dominates New Testament knowledge, and it covers the whole range of activities that takes place within one’s inner self. These activities include thinking, grieving, rejoicing, desiring, understanding and decision-making. Sin and evil reside in the human heart according to a number of Old and New Testament Scriptures, e.g. Genesis 6:5; Deuteronomy 15:9; Proverbs 12:20; Ecclesiastes 9:3; Matthew 12:34; Matthew 15:18-20; Acts 5:4, Romans 1:21; and Hebrews 3:12, to name but a few.

In other words, the position of the preacher I noted earlier that the heart and spirit are the same then implies that the spirit of man (as a separate entity) is the seat of sin and evil. How would such a situation then create a protective womb for the Holy Spirit in the way Joseph Alvarez would have us believe?

### **The confusion in Lee’s explanation**

As I noted before, Witness Lee’s interpretation of Romans 9:1, “*My conscience bearing witness with me in the Holy Spirit*” is that the conscience is the primary or leading part of the spirit. He then presents the heart as a composition of the soul and the conscience. Several verses from Scripture are used to explain that the mind (Gen 6:5 and Matt 9:4), the will (Acts 11:23 and Heb 4:12b), and the emotions (John 16:6) are part of the heart. However, these are generally depicted by others as the composite parts of the soul! Finally, Lee states that Scripture makes it clear that the conscience or leading part of the

spirit, is also included in the heart of the human (Heb 10:22 and 1 John 3:20) (Lee, 2002).

Once again, we see how confusion is sown by trying to read into the Scriptures something it never intended. Wommack, for example, teaches that the conscience should be included in the definition of the soul! And so the confusion grows!

### **The centre of our being; determines behaviour and deeds**

In their commentary to Luke 6:45, Stamps and his editorial team of the Full Life Study Bible (1992: 932) declare that the heart is the centre of our being and as such it determines the outward behaviour and deeds. It is this centre of our being that needs to be changed or converted. The heart in Scripture represents the totality of those faculties or ‘parts’ that those who hold to the typical threefold nature of the human associate with the (negative) soul: intellect, emotion, desire, and the exercise of one’s own free will. Consequently, an impure heart corrupts one’s thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. A new, transformed heart, made after the image of Christ, is what is needed. This explanation is much more in harmony with the Hebraic use of the concrete concept to illustrate an abstract idea.

**Acts 5:4** – Peter asks Ananias why Satan had filled his **heart** to lie to the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 8:37** – The Ethiopian eunuch asks Philip what would hinder for him to be baptised. *“And Philip said, if thou believest with all thine **heart**, then thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

In contrast and as I previously noted, some describe the heart as another term for spirit – and according to them the spirit has to be ‘born again’; it is not transformed.

### **Last thoughts on the heart in the Bible**

In his discussion of body part metaphors in biblical Hebrew, Steinberg (2003) lists an interesting variety of applications, with parallel Scripture references from the King James Version and the Revised Standard Version, but none of them entail the concept of the spirit in the sense that the threefold teaching presents. His list comprises: the seat

of emotions; seat of vital force; seat of feelings; inclination or disposition; determination or courage; attention, consideration, and reason; the mind in general; the conscience; inside or middle; seat of joy and grief; and organised strength. Once again one can see the dangers of losing accurate context for the Scriptures.

### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Part of the view found in popular Christian literature and preaching is that God is a trinity, and as the human being is created in God's image, he has to be a threefold or triune being too; which is usually explained as being a spirit, having a soul and living in a body. Such analogies, however, cannot be drawn directly from the Bible itself and come only by way of crude deduction and a confusing array of assumptions. Hebrews 4:12, one of the only two foundational Scriptures for this view, for example, does not separate the soul from the spirit, but indicates that the Word of God judges the thoughts and attitude of the heart, penetrating into man's innermost being.

It seems an appropriate opportunity to make some observations at this point, on the teachings of the Greek Gnostic teachers the apostle John warned about (1 John 1-2, 4; and 3 John 3-4). The word 'Gnosticism' comes from the Greek word *gnōsis*. It means 'knowledge', and the Gnostics believed that the way to salvation was a special knowledge about the nature of the world.

These Gnostics taught, amongst other things, that humans were composed of body, soul, and spirit. The spirit, which they regarded as the divine substance of man, was enclosed within the soul. Whereas the former two were seen to be evil as they were part of the human's earthly existence, the spirit was asleep and ignorant, and needed to be awakened and liberated by special knowledge. In this manner the earthly man was released from his earthly captivity and returned to the realm of light where the soul became reunited with God. One can appreciate that these teachings, as they were blended with Christian beliefs, created serious heresies in the new church doctrine.

Is there not an amazing agreement between the modern threefold or trichotomist teachings on the constitutional nature of the human, and that of the Gnostics of the apostle's era?

An interesting question to those who stand on this supposition that the human being must be a 'trinity' being, so to speak, because God is a trinity, is: as one of the three parts identified in the human nature make-up is the soul, how then does one account for the Scriptural references to God's soul? Furthermore, seeing that the human is created in God's image, of which one of the trinity would the soul be the manifest equivalent? And the body? After all, God said, according to Genesis 1:26, "*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness*" (HCSB).

# OTHER VIEWS OF HUMAN NATURE

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*“And the LORD God formed man (of) the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7; KJV).*

*“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam (was made) a quickening spirit” (1 Cor 15:45; KJV).*

## INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

### Monism & Dichotomism

**T**here are two other main streams of thought about the composition of the human. One of these views the human being simply as a single undividable being. This is called monism. The other group consists of those who hold the view that the human being is made up of two parts or elements, and this twofold view is called dichotomism.

As we go on to consider the interpretation of the Bible by these groups, I will also discuss a number of other uses or meanings of the expression ‘spirit’ in the Scriptures. However, let us first consider a very little known, yet a biblical topic: the soul of God.

## THE SOUL OF GOD

### Scripture clearly refers to God’s soul

As I studied the topic of the soul-spirit, I noted that authors across the spectrum of literature constantly referred to the fact that God is a spirit. Because He is a spirit and man is made after His image, it



means that man shares the spirit essence or characteristic with God – something that other elements of creation do not have. This makes out a strong element of the argument of the threefold view of the human being.

Scripture, however, also refers to the soul of God, for example:

I will set My tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you (Lev 26:11).

Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him (...) (Isa 42:1).

Be instructed, O Jerusalem, Lest My soul depart from you; lest I make you desolate, a land not inhabited (Jer 6:8) (NKJV).

Isaiah 42:1 is cited also by Jesus in Matthew 12:18. Note that Jeremiah 6:8 describes that absolute desolation follows the departure of God's soul. These references to God's soul accentuate the concept as wholeness: it refers to God's whole being.

### **A Jewish Rabbi's understanding**

I had never before really realised that the Bible refers to the soul of God (the Hebrew word used in each case above is the word *nephesh*). Consequently, I decided to test Leviticus 26:11 with a Jewish Rabbi's understanding, and I wrote to him: "*Currently studying the soul, trying to understand the concept. Leviticus 26:11 mentions the nephesh of God. Is 'soul' the correct translation for nephesh in this case*"? The Rabbi replied that in this context, the word *nephesh* should be translated as 'spirit. According to him the Jewish commentaries explain that this verse is referring to the Name (*Hashem*) resting His Spirit in the *Beis Hamikdash* or Holy House (Danzinger, 2008). This answer once more demonstrates the **interrelated meaning** of these expressions. Remember that *nephesh* is usually translated with 'soul', although it is sometimes translated differently (for example, Genesis 1:20, where it is translated 'life' in the KJV).

### **ISR states that 'soul' and 'being' are synonyms**

The Institute for Scripture Research translates Leviticus 26:11 in the following manner:

And I shall set My Dwelling Place in your midst, and My **being** shall not reject you.

This translation of the verse is in keeping with the Institute's one declared purpose of restoring the meaning to many words, which have become popular to use, but that do not reflect the meaning of the original. A quick scan of their text shows that they have seemingly consistently replaced the word 'soul' with the word 'being'. They most certainly did so with Isaiah 42:1 and Jeremiah 6:8 – and both these Scripture portions clearly indicate God's whole being!

The New Jerusalem Bible does not follow the ISR approach throughout, but it does, for example, also substitute 'whole being' for 'soul' in Psalm 84:2.

### **A shadow of God?**

I have purposefully included this section to show once again just how important it is to do thorough word study all the time, and also study the context and cultural background carefully. It certainly calls us to caution in our interpretations of what it means to be made or created in God's image.

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**Have you realised that the flame of a candle, although it is a light source itself, also casts a shadow of its own if another light shines upon it?**

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Interestingly, one of the explanations of the word *selem* or 'image', is that of a shadow. A shadow remains connected to the object or figure it is projected from. Your shadow may change shape or form as you move across different environments, but it always remains connected. Is it perhaps possible that 'shadow' more accurately portrays what God said when He declared that humankind was made in His image? It certainly opens up interesting possibilities of interpretation. However, in the end, our desire should be for the Scriptural truth, and not for interesting possibilities.

## **THE HUMAN AS A SINGLEFOLD BEING (MONISM)**

### **Immortal soul is unthinkable**

According to the teachers or followers of this view, the Bible does not distinguish between body, soul and spirit, but views the human being simply as a self. When these three terms are used, they basically need to be regarded as having the same meaning. To them, the idea that a human can somehow exist apart from a body is unthinkable.

Consequently, there can be no possibility of post death existence in a state without your body. Immortality of the soul is quite unacceptable to them. Human beings are unitary beings. According to their understanding, Hebrew thought is said to know no distinction within the human personality (Erickson, 1992: 173-174). The Hebraic perspectives I included in the third Chapter clearly refute such a statement.

### **Overlooking significant Scripture**

The absolute single fold view of the human nature seems to overlook some significant scriptural data. There are passages in the Bible, for example, that indicate an intermediate state between death and resurrection. One of these is Jesus' statement to the one on the cross with Him, that he would be with Jesus in Paradise that day (Luke 23:43). This referred to an intermediate state which was part of Hebraic understanding of death within the old covenant dispensation. It was also called going to sleep with the fathers (1 Kgs 2:10). Passages such as these most certainly indicate the continued existence of the soul after physical death. I regularly find that people omit this from their knowledge base.

Paul also refers to being away from the body and at home with the Lord (2 Cor 5:8). Finally, Matthew 10:28 (and other Scriptures) make a distinction between body and soul that is difficult to simply ignore or dismiss:

And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul;  
rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell.

Where they do have a point is that the concept of soul sometimes describes the whole person, as any serious word study would show. Consider 1 Peter 2:11 as an example:

Dearly beloved, I beseech (you) as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.

The Holman Christian Standard Bible renders it as “*war against you*” and The Scriptures Version has “*battle against the life.*”

In order to get past the questionable limitations of this single fold view, and without having to accept either the threefold or twofold view (whose points of agreement exceed their differences), Erickson (1992: 174-175) proposes an alternative model called **Conditional Unity**. According to this model, the human is a materialized singlefold being that is broken down at death, so that the immaterial aspect lives on even as the material aspect decomposes. At the resurrection, there is a return to a material or bodily condition. This body will have some points of continuity with the former body, but will at the same time be a new or reconstituted or spiritual body. (The resurrection doctrine is mentioned here as part of this specific view, but I do not deal with it as such in this book as it falls outside the book’s purpose).

One only has to study the manifestation of astral projection in the occult world to realise that this model overlooks or obscures the realities of an immaterial but living aspect of the human nature that can somehow loose itself, or at least extend its position in some way from the physical body into the ‘spiritual’ or unseen realm. Testimonies of near death experiences provide similar information. Nonetheless, the model provides food for thought and careful study.

## **THE HUMAN AS A TWOFOLD BEING (DICHOTOMISM)**

### **Historically the most widely held view**

The view that humans are composed of two elements has probably been the most widely held view through most of the history. These two elements are:

- A material (physical) aspect, the body; and
- an immaterial aspect, the soul or spirit.

The body or physical part is the part that dies. The soul or immaterial aspect survives death and lives on – for example, Matthew 10:28 and Revelation 6:9; 20:4.4

## **Interchangeable terms**

As far as 1 Thessalonians 5: 23 and Hebrews 4:12 are concerned, this group states that if those verses are taken to present soul and spirit as separate entities, that same principle should be followed in other verses. Luke 10: 27 (“*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind*”), for example, presents four entities, and they hardly match those in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and Hebrews 4:12. This statement of Jesus does not include the word ‘spirit’ and I have previously shown that the word ‘heart’ is not just simply another term for ‘spirit’. Therefore, the terms ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ seem to be used interchangeably, as indeed, one finds in Hebraic thought.

As I noted at the beginning of this section, those who believe that the Bible teaches a twofold view of human nature, believe humans are made up of a physical body and one immaterial part. Soul and spirit are interchangeable terms for this one immaterial part.

## **Support from Scripture**

Let us consider a number of verses that support this view:

And Hannah answered and said, ‘No, my lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have neither drunk wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD’ (1 Sam 1:15).

Whereas the threefold teaching is that the soul is the seat of the emotions, Hannah is expressing the emotion of sorrow in her spirit. On the other hand, the typical threefold teaching is that one relates to God in the spirit and here Hannah is found to be pouring out her soul before the Lord.

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 (Job 7:11).

Like Hannah, Job describes the experience of emotion (anguish) in his spirit. In addition, this verse is an example of the Hebraic poetic device called parallelism in Hebrew. There are different forms of parallelism in Hebrew writing. In the case of this verse, the second line restates the same thought that is found in the first line (which is called

synonymous parallelism). Speak and complain are both means of vocalizing one's feelings, while anguish and bitterness are both forms of severe emotional distress. Soul and spirit, therefore, both indicate the same origin of these emotions (Zeolla, 1999).

With my soul I have desired You in the night, yes, by my spirit within me I will seek you early (...) (Isa 26:9).

And Mary said: 'My soul magnifies the Lord, And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior' (Luke 1:46, 47).

These are both clear illustrations of the Hebrew poetic form of synonymous parallelism. What I want to underline is the fact that knowledge of this poetic form (and others) in the Hebrew writings gives one an understanding that is easily missed otherwise. I can understand that without that knowledge, one would be open to interpreting the above verses (and others), as if they are presenting soul and spirit as two separate concepts.

It should not be any surprise that this twofold view is strongly rejected by persons who hold the threefold view of the human nature. Andrew Wommack (1997-2007), for example, states that Christians can actually die from sickness or disease while the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lies dormant within them because they do not have a functional understanding of spirit, soul and body in their daily lives. As noted before, he is a firm believer in the spirit and soul as two separate entities. His conclusion of God's manifest power in humans is not necessarily wrong, but he clearly makes it from a wrong foundational perspective.

### **Blaming it on Greek philosophers**

Gene Edwards (2004: 225) makes the strong statement that the twofold view of the human nature taught by Christian seminaries is one reason why institutional Christianity will never see spiritual depths. It is a teaching that precedes Christianity according to Edwards and comes from the teachings of Plato, Aristotle and others. A number of the early church fathers followed this pattern. In the process, no one noticed that the Christian faith was losing spiritual depth and that this loss was being replaced with principles of philosophy. There is no place for an indwelling Lord in such teachings, writes Edwards.

He continues that in a world where man is but body and soul, to attempt to understand and experience the Christian's spiritual side is to end up bumping into the mindset of Western man. Christian counseling tries to convince us that soul problems can be solved with the soul. However reasonable that may sound, most soul problems can be solved only if the spiritual faculties also come into play, according to him. Once again we can see how definitions of core concepts influence our conclusions.

It is interesting to note that critics of both the twofold and threefold views (critics within the respective camps) put the blame for the others' viewpoints on the Greek philosophy of Plato and others. I think the brief description of the Gnostic view in the previous chapter shows clearly that Edwards is in error in this specific regard by filtering out any truth that will refute his viewpoint.

### **Spiritual philosophizing**

The statements by Edwards I noted above come from his book *Living By The Highest Life*. The book is not without Scripture references, but much of his descriptions are not really rooted in the Scriptures. In fact, in view of his accusations of the role of philosophy, one cannot but notice to what extent he makes use of what I have come to call 'spiritual philosophising'. Herein lies the danger: we can fall into the trap of using biblical terminology effortlessly and in all sincerity, but inaccurately (whether slightly or wholly) and so convince people we are, in fact, teaching the Bible. I have been at that place!

Today, I cannot help but notice how much 'spiritual philosophy' is prevalent in sermons in our churches, on the television broadcasts, and in an abundance of Christian books believers are reading. If one follows the Berean example, you will see in sermon after sermon, and teaching after teaching, just how deeply rooted the techniques of Greek philosophy have become in Christian teaching and preaching.

As a young university student I was resident in a mainline church hostel and understandably met many students in ministry and theology. I cannot but wryly remember today that for some three years they studied Hebrew, Greek, Bible Knowledge, and...Philosophy! It would be naive to think this last subject did not have a profound influence on the reasoning patterns of those students and eventual ministers.

It is important to note in the light of Edwards' strong statements that even the prophecies regarding Messiah quoted by Peter in Acts 2:27 & 31 refer to His soul and not to His spirit!

## **CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

### **No hidden agenda**

It might seem that I did not go into the singlefold and twofold views to the same extent that I did with the threefold doctrines. I have no hidden agenda for this – in the discussion of the threefold view in the previous chapter, my comments and discussions of what I see as less than good interpretation of the Scriptures are undoubtedly also presentations or support of the twofold view of human nature – and even then it must be applied wisely and carefully. There are most certainly occurrences in the Bible text in which a unified whole is intended. One of these is Genesis 2:7, which states that the man God formed from the dust of the earth became a living soul. I deal with these aspects in the last chapter, as I try to 'put it all together'.

In the next chapter I focus on alternative uses of the expression spirit in the Scriptures.





# ALTERNATIVE MEANINGS OF THE TERM ‘SPIRIT’

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*“And Hannah answered and said, ‘No, my lord, I (am) a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD” (1 Sam 1:15; KJV).*

*“We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6; KJV).*

## INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

### **Neglect to define terms**

**O**ne of the greatest deficiencies or gaps I have found in popular Christian literature, and unfortunately in the preaching in church services and on the numerous television broadcasts, is that authors and preachers use terms or concepts without regularly defining their meaning. Apart from wrongly accepting that everybody knows exactly what each term means, for example faith, believe, soul, spirit, and spiritual, the authors and preachers themselves often become entangled in confusing application of such terms. This is perhaps most prevalent where a preacher blindly follows a role model or mentor. You can see this on the Christian television channels – when the mentor/role model preaches on a topic, it is almost certain you’ll find at least some of his mentees preaching the same topic within a month or so down the line.

Such a case in point is the term ‘spirit’.

## ALTERNATIVE USES OF THE EXPRESSION ‘SPIRIT’

In a televised sermon during 2007 I heard the preacher using statements such as the following, based on certain texts of Scripture:

- Jacob’s spirit was revived (meaning the supposed independent entity of the spirit as part of Jacob’s constitutional makeup).
- She had a sorrowful spirit – “*So, sorrow is a spirit*” the preacher commented.
- Faith is a spirit.
- Fear is a spirit.
- In the same sense, he noted that Saul went looking for someone with a ‘familiar spirit’.

In the absence of definitions in each case and in view of the general sense of his teaching, the implication was that all of these referred to ‘spirit’ as an immaterial (or incorporeal) life essence or invisible life form (or demon), which was the case in the example of Saul. However, the first four examples all refer to a disposition or an inclination; an attitude; a state of mind.

### **Spirit does not always mean an incorporeal life form**

Let us now consider a number of alternative uses of the expression ‘spirit’ (Scripture references from the NKJV, unless otherwise stated).

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**Incorporeal means something without body or physical substance.**

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(1). Genesis 45:27, “...and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived” could also be rendered accurately in its idiomatic sense as ‘Jacob was content,’ or ‘Jacob’s heart picked up’. We could say in simple modern English that Jacob felt happy or encouraged! It has nothing to do with an entity called ‘spirit’ in the sense of the three-fold spirit-soul-body view’s understanding.

(2). A similar position is found in Judges 15:18-19. After killing a thousand Philistines with a donkey’s jawbone Samson became very thirsty. At his cry, God split a hollow place, and water came out. We then read that Samson drank of the water. His spirit returned, and he revived. To put it in simple English: Samson drank and his vigour or

strength returned. It does not indicate that thirst caused his ‘spirit’ or incorporeal/invisible life essence to leave him.

(3). If sorrow, for example, is to be regarded as a spirit in the sense of that higher life essence or incorporeal life form that exerts (demonic?) influence on people, the spirit of sorrow would then either be an ever-present (or omniscient) demon as there are people who experience extreme sorrow at the same time all over the world. Alternatively there would be many spirits or demons bearing this name. This last statement could possibly be true of evil spirits, but the essence is that this is not what 1 Samuel 1:15 is stating. It is describing Hannah’s state of mind at the time: she was sad.

### **Consistent application reveals problems**

I remember once viewing a video of the late Derek Prince in which he described the spirit of heaviness mentioned in Isaiah 61:3 as a demon. Add the aforementioned reference of sorrow as a spirit (demon), then to be consistent one would have to accept that Paul was in continual bondage of two demons according to Romans 9:2: *“I tell the truth in Christ, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart.”* Remember there are some who wrongly regard the ‘heart’ as a synonym for the ‘spirit’.

I realise many would say I am writing nonsense, but this is exactly the sort of confusion that follows the threefold teaching of the human constitution, especially because of the variety of contradictory viewpoints within that doctrinal alignment.

### **General disposition or attitude**

(4). In Psalm 78:8 Asaph states the following: *“(That they) may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its **heart** aright, and whose **spirit** was not faithful to God”*.

This is another example of synonymous parallelism which I previously noted and is also clearly not descriptive of an unfaithful incorporeal life form indwelling the fathers, but of a corporate and general disposition or attitude of the nation towards God.

## Inner turmoil

(5). Daniel 2:1, 3 describe that king Nebuchadnezzar's spirit was troubled. Then, in Daniel 4:1-5 we find the king writing to all the people, nations and languages of his Kingdom, telling them about the dream he had. He describes how the dream made him afraid, "(...) *and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my **head** troubled me.*"

Later, in Daniel 7:1, we find that Daniel too, "(...) *had a dream and visions of his **head** upon his bed.*" In verse 15 Daniel states that he (...) *was grieved in my **spirit within my body**, and the visions of my **head** troubled me.*"

In their public teachings, those who follow the threefold view of humankind, habitually put their hand on their belly when they refer to their 'spirit' and to the temples of their head when they speak of 'soul-ishness' in its assigned negative meaning. The fact is that the above-mentioned verses in Daniel declare that his spirit became troubled by the visions of his head (which refers to the soul in trichotomist teaching). The Holman Christian Standard Bible translates the word as 'mind' instead of head. Daniel is describing an inner turmoil and is clearly not differentiating between two separate entities called 'spirit' and 'soul'. To do so is to read above what is written.

## Various meanings in dictionaries

(6). Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (2006: 675-676) explains a number of meanings of the terms that are usually translated 'spirit' in the English versions of the Bible:

- The basic sense of the term ruach is that of wind or breath.
- At times, however, it describes the general character or disposition of an individual or group. In these instances, the meaning closely resembles that of the term *nepes* (or *nephesh*) which is usually translated 'soul'.
- In similar fashion, ruach can indicate a state of mind or personal attribute, such as a 'bitter spirit' (Gen 26:35).
- Ruach is also used to describe supernatural or angelic beings (e.g. 1 Sam 16:15-16).
- "*The zenith [high point or peak] of spiritual personality is God himself.*"

- The New Testament concept of *pneuma* takes on similar meanings. It can mean the human spirit in general (Jas 2:26) or that which animates or gives life to the human body (Matt 27:50). [All these explanations considered, I cannot help but observe that the last statement matches dictionary descriptions of the soul].
- Paul’s usage, especially though not exclusively, regularly refers to the human as belonging to and interacting with the spiritual or invisible realm. It is in this sense that God most immediately encounters man (e.g. Rom 8:16; 1 Cor 2:11).

### **Attitude or inclination of faith**

(7). Philippians 1:27 also presents a position in which Paul uses the term ‘spirit’ in the sense that they should reflect or have the same attitude or inclination of faith for the gospel.

2 Timothy 1:7 is a verse that is often over-spiritualised in sermons. Both Vincent and Robertson (e-Sword) explain the ‘spirit of fearfulness’ as a mental disposition of cowardice (in other words, to do with the mind!). The ‘spirit of power’ then indicates a boldness to overcome all obstacles and face all dangers.

### **Worldly inclination compared to the mind of Christ**

(8). In 1 Corinthians 2:12-16 Paul uses the term ‘spirit of the world’ to describe an attitude or inclination in comparison to a position of having the ‘mind of Christ’. In the former instance, they would be led by a worldly inclination or ‘spirit’ (i.e. attitude), but in the latter by the Holy Spirit. There is no indication of a worldly inclined incorporeal entity (demon) that could direct their actions. This is the same message that John brings in his first epistle without using the term ‘spirit’:

*“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world.”* (1 John 2:15, 16).

### **Essence of corporate disposition**

(9). John then uses the term ‘spirit’ in chapter 4 and verse 6 to describe the essence of corporate attitude or disposition: *“We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”*

Once again, the apostle John is referring to a reigning attitude. One of the reasons why he was expressing concern was the growing popularity of a system of false teachings known as Gnosticism, that I referred to earlier. **One of the concepts they taught was that humans are composed of a body, soul, and spirit.** The spirit was allegedly asleep and ignorant, and needed to be awakened and liberated by knowledge. These Gnostics blended their views and beliefs with Christian beliefs, creating serious heresies in the process and thus became disruptive to the fellowship within the church (Word In Life Study Bible: 2287). I cannot help but notice the similarities with much of the popular trichotomist teaching of today.

### **A disposition of wisdom and revelation knowledge**

(10). In his letter to the Ephesians (1:17) Paul writes he is praying that they might receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. He continues in verse 18 that (...) *the eyes of your understanding being enlightened (...)*”

Once again, ‘spirit’ does not refer to an incorporeal life form, but to a disposition of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.

The New Jerusalem Bible renders ‘mind’ for the KJV’s ‘understanding’, while the Complete Jewish Bible renders verse 18, *“I pray that he will give light to the eyes of your hearts, so that you will understand (...).”* Bear in mind the Hebraic understanding of the ‘heart’ as the seat of the emotions.

The Christian Standard Bible by Holman, as an example of a more recent version, also uses *“the eyes of your heart.”*

### **A wrong emphasis**

(11). The word ‘spirit’ is used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:4 to warn the church against the dangers of receiving the wrong emphasis in the messages of preachers. This is also the essence of what he conveys in Philippians 1:18, although he does not use the term ‘spirit’ in this case. In 1 Timothy 4:1 Paul sounds a warning against ‘deceiving spirits’ or ‘seducing spirits’. Robertson proposes that the grammar indicates an active sense, and is probably a reference to some heathen or the worst of the Gnostics (Robertson, e-Sword).

## **Renewed inclination**

(12). I noted earlier that Ephesians 4:23, in which Paul states that they were “*being renewed in the spirit of their minds*” (HCSB), emphasises a change in their inclination, or disposition, or attitude. It has nothing to do with a renewal of their ‘spirit’ in the sense of their invisible life essence.

## **Thinking of them**

(13). Colossians 2:5 presents yet another form of usage. By the statement, “*For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your [good] order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ*”, Paul is saying that he is with them in his thoughts, perhaps even unconsciously. In plain English: he is thinking of them. This is the comparable meaning conveyed in 1 Thessalonians 2:17. Paul wrote that although his group had left the Thessalonian believers in person, they had not done so in their hearts (their inner being).

## **Same characteristics**

(14). Another important example I wish to note is that of Luke 1:13-17:

But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

The use of ‘spirit’ in verse 17 cannot be construed to say that Elijah’s incorporeal life entity or ‘spirit’ would now return in the form of John, as that would constitute reincarnation, something the Bible does not teach. Its use indicates that John will model and reflect the very same characteristics (e.g. boldness to speak out against the king) that Elijah did. Jamieson, Fausset & Brown (e-Sword) add that John did not do



miracles like Elijah, but showed the same power to ‘turn the heart’. This sense is also found in Elisha’s plea for a double portion of Elijah’s spirit – it had to do with the empowerment which enables a man to do a particular job or that which represented the quality of a man (Vine et.al, 1996: 241).

**(15).** In Luke 9:55 Jesus rebukes His disciples James and John, saying to them that they did not know what manner of spirit they were of. The commentaries, available on the free e-Sword electronic Bible study resource, are not all in agreement as to the precise meaning, but nonetheless, they do not describe the expression ‘spirit’ in this context as a reference to an incorporeal life entity. George Lamsa, who was raised in an Aramaic culture showing little change from the time of Jesus explains the use as an idiom meaning that they did not know what kind of temper they had. This explanation certainly fits into the flow of the specific dialogue. An Old Testament example of similar meaning is found in Ecclesiastes 10:4.

### **THE ‘SOULISH’ TRAGEDY**

I have referred previously to the expression ‘soulish’ (and by implication also ‘soulishness’). They have become core expressions through which many teachers and preachers indicate the negative aspects of the human and human life. The question is: How biblical are they? Unfortunately, these expressions are used abundantly in literature and sermons, but without much attempt to properly root it in Scripture. Watchman Nee used the expression extensively in his book *The Spiritual Man*, from which several references are cited in this book.

#### **Not firmly rooted in Scripture**

Bible teacher Derek Prince (1996: 24-40) was one of those teaching the threefold nature of the human who attempted at least to provide a biblical explanation of the expression ‘soulish’ and its other forms. Explaining his understanding that the soul was formed when spirit and body came together, Prince then also builds from the typical assumption that the spirit died when Adam sinned. At the same time, Adam’s soul became a rebel. When a person is ‘born again’ his spirit is made alive and his soul is reconciled with God. I have already pointed out the error in such reasoning.

According to Prince, the soul is capable of praise and thanksgiving, but only the spirit is capable of worship. To his credit, Prince states that this is what he believes; he does not try to do the impossible to root it in Scripture. As one can see, the moment you accept the three-fold concept of human nature, everything else is built on that assumption, and the Bible is no longer your plumb-line. Alternatively, you are guided to read into the Scriptures things beyond what is written.

### **Creating a new word**

Then follows an amazing discussion and eventual acknowledgement from this widely respected Bible teacher:

The Greek word for spirit is pneuma, from which we get the English word pneumatic – that is a drill that is operated by air. That is because pneuma means ‘breath’, ‘wind’ and ‘spirit’. Now the adjective from pneuma is pneumatikos. How do we translate that into English? We know that pneuma is “spirit.” Obviously, the English adjective from pneuma is . . . what? Spiritual. That’s right. There is no choice. ...the Greek word for soul is psuche...we have psuche and the adjective is psuchikos. Now, there is no hesitation about the translation of the noun – it is ‘soul’. But what about the adjective? The problem is that English does not have a word ‘soulish’. **I believe, therefore, that we have to create a word to translate the Bible correctly** (my accentuation).

### **Not convincing**

In his further discussion, Prince does not convincingly explain why a word needs to be created – for example, why he is convinced the various words used by existing translations (natural, sensual, worldly minded, and unspiritual) do not convey the meaning of the Greek. He does discuss the following verses in the New Testament in which the word psuchikos is used in the Greek manuscripts:

1 Corinthians 2:14, 15: “But the natural [Prince: ‘soulish’] man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know (them), because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”

The ‘soulish’ man is not in harmony with the Spirit and cannot understand the things of the Spirit, however educated he may be. He is operating in the realm of the soul. Prince does not really explain why the word ‘natural’ in the translation is not correct. He also does not discuss the true and Biblical meaning of the expression ‘soul’ – and this is a regrettable error.

1 Corinthians 15:44, 46: “it is sown a natural [Prince: ‘soulish’] body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural [Prince: ‘soulish’] body, and there is a spiritual body...Howbeit that (was) not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural [Prince: ‘soulish’]; and afterward that which is spiritual.”

### **Biblical concept of the soul ignored**

Prince then explains that these verses describe a contrast between the ‘soulish’ and the ‘spiritual’. Five commentaries (e-Sword) I consulted all convey the same interpretation I have, and that is that these verses are dealing with a body of flesh and blood (therefore, perishable) as against a spiritual body.

I am concerned about Prince’s type of reasoning, for it completely ignores the definition of the biblical concept of the soul and creates a new concept with a very strong negative (or worse) meaning. It is certainly not in harmony with the ancient Hebraic/biblical thought which has been presented a number of times throughout this book thus far. This constitutes scholarly sloppiness by someone who has always been presented and is widely admired as one of the world’s foremost Bible scholars. (I am one of those who greatly respect him).

James 3:15: “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but (is) earthly, sensual [Prince: ‘soulish’], devilish.”

The Amplified Bible uses ‘unspiritual (animal)’ instead of ‘sensual’ for *psuchikos*, while The Interlinear Bible edited by J.P. Green uses the word ‘beastly’. Once again, the context in James does not demand an understanding of the word ‘soul’ in the sense of the Genesis 2:7 description of man’s creation as a living soul, for example. To do so would imply that God breathed the breath of life into the man’s nostrils and thus man became a negative, destructive being. Did God have bad breath?

In making this last statement I realise that the explanation offered would probably be based on the fall of man.

### **No harmony with Genesis 2:7**

Whatever way one considers the use of the ‘un-English’ term ‘soul-ish’, it consistently ends in a clinical division between ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ in which all the negative manifestations of human life are ascribed to the soul. The expression ‘soul’ unavoidably becomes a clear synonym for ‘carnal’, ‘wordly’, ‘fleshly’, etc., which is something without scriptural support or substance. It cannot be remotely harmonised with Genesis 2:7. Consider just how far this reasoning is removed from Dawson’s statement that the soul is a spirit that is from God, righteous. Still, Dawson (1998), like Prince, follows the three-fold view of man.

### **Soulical**

Some use the word ‘soulical’, seemingly to differentiate something that is not quite as negative as ‘soul-ish’. The New Shorter Oxford Dictionary (2008) - surprisingly, in view of Derek Prince’s statement - contains both terms. ‘Soulical’ is explained as a term that is rarely used, but which simply means the same as ‘soul-ish’. ‘Soul-ish’ is then described as ‘of, or pertaining to the soul’.

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**The terms ‘soul-ish’ and ‘soulical’ carries the same meaning.**

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The implication is that one’s understanding of the concept of the soul will determine your understanding of what ‘soul-ish’ or ‘soulical’ entails. Surely, this is not a good position to be in and underlines why there has to be a clear and Biblical understanding of the soul/spirit concepts in the mind of believers. The moment this is not so, people become “(...) *tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching (...)*” (Eph 4:14). The array of doctrines of deliverance that are rooted in the view that man is a spirit, has a soul, and lives in a body is a good example of the dangerous waters, so to speak, that we have to navigate through.

In the end, even if it becomes necessary to create a new word, the responsibility is still upon the creator of the word to reflect the original biblical meaning accurately. To add one’s subjective interpretation is poor scholarship, if not downright manipulation of meaning.

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

As I have pointed out several times, people who hold to the teaching of a threefold nature of man, commonly present the mind (or intellect), will and emotions as the parts that make up the human soul. There are some variations, but this combination seems to be the most common point of departure.

Unfortunately, they ignore the fact that the Greek *pneuma*, which is the equivalent of the Hebrew *ruach*, is often used in the New Testament in a context that would represent the above description of the human soul. Therefore, one might have expected the Greek *psuche* to be used. Consider the following examples:

For who among men knows the concerns of a man except the spirit [*pneuma*] of the man that is in him? (1 Cor 2:11; HCSB)

Clearly, the ‘spirit’ is the faculty of comprehension, and therefore the mind, in this context. To try and prove otherwise takes a good dosage of spiritual philosophising. A similar position is found, for example, in 2 Corinthians 2:13:

I had no rest in my spirit because I did not find my brother Titus (...)" (HCSB).

I had no relief from anxiety, not finding my brother Titus there (...)" (NJB).

(...) but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there (NRSV).

I had no relief in my spirit, because I did not find my brother Titus there (NET).

In their explanatory notes, the editors of the NET Bible add: Or “*I had no peace of mind.*” Once again, one should note that using a single version of the Bible could easily be used to support the view one wishes to support. I have experienced exactly such an approach in various sermons.

Depending on the version one uses, you will find that the Greek word *psuche* is translated with approximately seven different expressions in

the New Testament: heart; heartily (combined with *ek*); life; make doubt (combined with *airo*); mind; soul; and you. The word *pneuma* is translated as ghost; Ghost (with Holy); life; spirit; Spirit; spiritual gift; spiritually; and wind (Pickle, 2008). To say, therefore, that in studying the Bible with the intention to rightly divide the Word of Truth, we need to make sure we have the context right – and that would include cultural, historical, geographical and literature context, not only a few verses before and after – is to understate the importance. I am sure the analysis so far has clearly demonstrated this. To do less is to invite error, and the world of Christian media sadly abounds with error. Error will not set the church free. It is the truth that will set us free.

Let us now also have a look at the biblical concept of spirituality.



# THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF SPIRITUALITY

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*“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Cor 2:13; KJV).*

*“And I, brethern, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal (even) as babes in Christ” (1 Cor 3:1; KJV).*

## INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

### **Vague, foggy and shrouded**

**M**ost of the relevant concepts have already been defined to some extent in the course of the previous chapters. Nonetheless, in view of the random and often careless usage of the expression ‘spirit’ in the Christian environment, it is inevitable that the expression ‘spiritual’ would likewise be thrown about in random and careless fashion. Two concerned parents, for example, once came to us for counsel with their son who was engaged to a young lady whose church is regarded widely as a sect in South Africa, if not a cult. In discussing Biblical principles with him, his standard answer throughout the evening was, *“The Bible must be understood spiritually.”* And so we also hear preachers using the expression abundantly in similar fashion. Like other expressions such as ‘faith’ and ‘disciple’ they mostly just accept that the audience have exactly the same understanding of the expression’s meaning their preacher has. Longman (2010) describes reality well with the statement that in contemporary usage, the word ‘spiri-



tual' has become *"the word of choice for vague, foggy, and shrouded things with no rules, no substance, and no definition."*

The expression 'spiritual' is found approximately 30 times in the New Testament (depending on which translation you use), and is mostly used by Paul. It appears for the first time in Romans 1:11:

For I want very much to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you (HCSB).

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**The expression 'spiritual' only came to be used after Pentecost.**

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Having said this, one must note that the letter to the Galatians and the first one to the Corinthians, in which Paul also used the expression, were both written before the letter to the Romans. Although Romans 1:11 gives us the first physical instance of usage in the New Testament of our Bibles, it was not Paul's first usage of the term. The concept or expression 'spiritual' came to be used in the Scriptures only after Pentecost! It is not found in the Gospel accounts.

### **Assumption and confusion**

I noted before that the Bible does not give a clear and precise description or definition of the soul. The same is true for the expressions 'spirit' and 'spiritual'. If we study the influence of pagan philosophy and Greek philosophical techniques on Christian thought throughout the centuries, and that of the more modern principles of the variety of approaches to interpretation, it is little wonder that confusion reigns in this regard. In their efforts to fill this void Christian teachers and writers have been presenting teaching filled with assumption and confusion, albeit clothed in biblical terminology. Members of a group found in South Africa, known as the Nuwe Hervormingsnetwerk (New Reformerist Network), not only often still tend to give the impression that they see themselves as 'Christian' although they deny the deity of Christ Jesus, but they claim to have replaced organised religion (the church) with 'spirituality'.

Seeing then that we have been giving extensive attention to rightly dividing the biblical concept of the 'spirit' in this book, let us also consider and seek to clarify the biblical meaning of the expression 'spiritual'. In doing so, we need to remind ourselves once again, that the ancient Hebrew mind always expressed abstract thought through

concrete ideas. Thus, the concept of the heart became the seat of emotion, for example, and the stomach (or belly) the seat of life (Ancient Hebrew Research Center, 2004). However, it never proclaimed the physical heart or belly as the manifest or real seat of emotion or life. The moment we lose sight of this reality, we are running the risk of distorting the biblical meaning, however sincere we may be. Pastors and others who vigorously shake a person's belly in the belief that this is where his or her spirit resides when praying for such a person to receive the gift of tongues, are so sincere, but still busy with an unbiblical exercise. And because they do and teach this, others inevitably follow as they receive the 'biblical teaching' in this regard. I was there! Oh, but for the grace of God, where would we be?

### SOME MODERN VIEWS

A quick search on the internet presented a large array of writings, ideas and meanings, which underline the importance for the Christian to understand and apply the concept correctly. There are simply too many examples to discuss them all, but consider the following three examples:

- *Spiritual meaning: 92 tips for changing your spiritual reality by bringing more spiritual awareness into your life* (the name of a book).
- *Spiritual Interpretation Dictionary of Bible Words* (obviously a book).
- *The Bible's Deeper Meaning. Every single thing in the Bible (sic) has its own rich symbolic meaning, which helps us to understand our spiritual life* (the search extract pointing to a website).

Wikipedia (2011) states that “*spirituality can refer to an ultimate or immaterial reality; an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of their being; or the ‘deepest values and meanings by which people live’.* *Spiritual practices, including meditation, prayer and contemplation, are intended to develop an individual’s inner life; such practices often lead to an experience of connectedness with a larger reality, yielding a more comprehensive self; with other individuals or the human community; with nature or the cosmos; or with the divine realm.*”

Although Wikipedia and the other examples noted above are not benchmark theological resources, I am sure that by this time you will already have seen the dangers to the Christian's accurate understanding of the concept. This is even more so if one considers the very concerning statistics relating to the lack of a biblical world view of Protestant pastors in the USA, for example (Barna, 2004). How are these pastors, of which 49% were found as not having a biblical worldview, to be trusted on the pulpits of Christian churches?

The confusion that reigns specifically in the Christian environment is illustrated by the following statement by Watchman Nee in his book *Spiritual Man* (1968), especially since it represents a statement we often hear in some form from various teachers and preachers who are regularly seen on Christian television:

Christians often account what is soulical as spiritual, and thus they remain in a soulish state and seek not what is really spiritual.

In a letter to the Afrikaans newspaper *Beeld*, someone wrote, for example, that he has replaced 'formalised religion' in his life with 'spirituality'. Prayer to a supernatural being, who stands removed from and above his creation, has been replaced by this person, with 'conversation with the godly in himself and in everything and everybody' around him. He still reads the Bible, but it only serves as one of many 'spiritual textbooks' (Willem, 2011).

Sadly, because so many try to explain the expression from the trichotomist or threefold view of the human make up's point of departure, trying to connect it to the concept of the spirit as a separate entity from the soul, they do not succeed in bringing biblically correct clarity. It inevitably ends up in a presentation of 'spiritual' in contrast to 'soulish', as we have seen from Watchman Nee's abovementioned statement.

### **EXPLANATIONS IN DICTIONARIES AND THAYER'S LEXICON**

#### **Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words (1996: 594-595)**

According to this dictionary, the word *pneumatikos* always connotes the idea of invisibility and power. We do not find it in the Gospels, and it is an after-Pentecost expression. The expression is used of the

angelic hosts, and of things that have their origin with God. They are therefore in harmony with His character. As an adjective it indicates the purposes of God as it is revealed in the Gospels. ‘Spiritual songs’, for example, are then songs in which the focus is on things revealed by the Holy Spirit. The resurrection body of the dead would be ‘spiritual’ – in other words, of a nature suited to the heavenly environment.

As such the ‘spiritual’ state of the human’s soul should be normal for the believer, but it is not a fixed or absolute condition. Continuous growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ would be manifest evidence of true spirituality, according to 2 Peter 3:18.

### **New Bible Dictionary (Marshall, et.al., 1996: 1125-1131)**

The compilers of this dictionary did not include a stand-alone article on the expression ‘spiritual’, but they have interwoven it within their discussion of ‘Spirits, Holy Spirit’, as well as ‘Spiritual Gifts’. They point out that life for the believer became qualitatively different from what it was before they came to faith in the Christ. Consequently, daily living became the believer’s means of responding to the Holy Spirit’s guidance. It was only as each one let the Spirit manifest through them in word and deed, that the group of believers grew towards the maturity of Christ.

### **Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words (2006: 676-677)**

Mounce and his co-editors deal only briefly with the concept. They state that the expression (*pneumatikos*) is used almost exclusively by Paul, conveying the sense of belonging to the spiritual realm and embodying or manifesting the ‘Spirit’. Secondly, it can be used as a pure adjective describing a ‘spiritual’ something, or it can be used as a noun and as such then refer to a spiritual ‘person’. Lastly, it can even stand alone in a neuter sense, and will as such indicate spiritual ‘things’.

### **The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1981: 523)**

The word *pneumatikos* relates firstly, to the human spirit or rational soul, being the part of man which is akin to God. It refers to something then, which possesses the nature of the rational soul. Secondly, it

indicates a belonging to a spirit or being that is higher than man, but inferior to God. The third usage refers to a belonging to the Holy Spirit (or Divine Spirit). In this sense, there are different contexts:

- **Referring to things**, it describes that which emanates from the Holy Spirit, or which reflects such effects or character. It will show the acts of a life dedicated to God and approved by Him, as a result of the Holy Spirit's influence.
- **Referring to persons**, it shows one (or even a group) who is filled with and governed by the Spirit of God.

The adverb 'spiritually' is used to describe the presence of the Holy Spirit, which is a hidden or mystical sense.

It seems that there is essential agreement between Thayer and the editors of the Vine Dictionary.

## OTHER SOURCES

### **Gary DeMar (2009)**

In an article by Gary DeMar under the heading, *What is true Spirituality?*, he makes the point that such 'spirituality' takes form as one lives in this world, following God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit. To be 'spiritual' is to be guided and motivated by the Holy Spirit; it means obeying God's commands as it is recorded in the Bible.

This 'spirituality' does not demand that one turns your back on life, but that one should avoid partaking in the world's uncleanness. The life of the spiritual person, in its biblical context, will be recognised by the manifest fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22, 23) or fruit of the Light (Eph 5:9). It is not about a ghost-like substance that inhabits the truly 'spiritual' person.

### **Wayne Jackson (1997-2010)**

Jackson also points out (like Vine, for example) that the expression is applied in several senses and that the specific sense has to be determined by the context. Among the various meanings, one finds the connotation of a non-material being, such as the spiritual forces of wickedness referred to by Paul in Ephesians 6:12. It may also refer to that which emanates from God and is consistent with God's moral

nature. When Paul wrote that the law was spiritual, it seems he was explaining the law as a product of God's mind, and not a legal code Israel developed gradually and naturally over a period of time.

A 'spiritual man' would be someone who welcomes the Holy Spirit's revelation (or guidance), in contrast to the 'natural man' who relies upon human wisdom, intellectual prowess, and intuitive faculties, but will not value divine revelation (or guidance). It is not achieved by a monastic lifestyle, and also does not demand the manifestation of miraculous gifts as a precondition. The 'spiritual' man or woman will be characterised by a yielding attitude (spirit) that longs more than anything else to obey God. Such a person will set his or her mind on the godly things above the worldly things.

Unfortunately, there are many contemporary ideas on the concept of being 'spiritual' that are alien to the biblical concept. It is important, nonetheless, to understand that the quality of being 'spiritual' is achieved by a determined effort (which we might add, demands a right attitude or spirit). This understanding again, is in harmony with Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 4:17- 5:21.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The variations of senses or meanings that the expression 'spiritual' may denote as we have seen from the above sources, is once again a call for rightly dividing the word of truth. It requires of us to be wary of reading above what is written. The pagan Greek philosophical practices that have been applied so widely over the centuries to Christian teaching and preaching, have done more damage than the teachers and preachers are willing to acknowledge. Many are probably just ignorant of this reality because they have simply not been taught the truth by their teachers and mentors, who were probably ignorant of this reality because they..., and so forth.

Over-spiritualisation of terms and concepts certainly do more damage than good. On the other hand, as Abraham Kuyper warned in 1911, scholars, while increasingly acknowledging that there is a mystical world to which we somehow stand in a certain relation, still wanted nothing to do with the revelation of God that has come out of that mystical world in the Scriptures. These scholars insist that this (...) *knowledge comes from within us, from our own conjectures and findings, from our own rational activities, from our own pondering and*

*meditation*” (De Boer, 1991). Is this not a clear description of the ‘soul’ of the modern religion we know as humanism? It also seems to be a fitting description for those who view themselves as so-called post-modernists and Bible scientists.

It is so very important to understand that one can be ‘spiritual’ without believing in Jesus the Christ. Such spirituality may manifest wonderful fruit of goodness in people, but it still misses the mark. After all, being spiritual, as important as it might be, is not the essence of the New Testament message; following Christ is (Longman, 2010)! Godly spirituality is a fruit of truly following Christ.

Whenever we talk about spirituality in the biblical sense, we have to take care and apply the Bible’s intention in our terminology, and not that of other religions or so-called ‘spiritualities’.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

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*“And these things brethren, I have transferred to myself and (to) Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think (of men) above which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against the other” (1 Cor 4:6; KJV).*

*“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15; KJV).*

### INTRODUCTORY OBSERVATIONS

**W**e have now walked and worked through much of the Scriptures regarding the soul-spirit concept and have unpacked a lot of different pieces in the process. Now we come to the place where it becomes necessary to put these pieces together for the purpose of presenting accurately what the biblical position is, and not those of human traditions or ‘revelations’. These traditions and revelations are something I often experience as nothing less than ‘spiritual philosophising’.

At the same time we are faced with the challenge not to fence ourselves in so tightly by an overly rigid interpretation or by creating just another set of traditions that we too rob the word of God of its power. This is what Jesus of Nazareth accused the religious leaders of his time of doing (Matt 15:1-9). I therefore do not present my interpretation as a set of rules, but exactly as that: my interpretation, with explanation as to why that is my understanding. In the process I trust it will serve as stimulation to those who read it to *“Make every effort to present yourself before God as a proven worker who has no need to be ashamed, but who keeps the message of truth on a straight path”* (2



Tim 2:15; NJB). My heart in all of this is summarised in 1 Timothy 4:16: *“Be conscientious about what you do and what you teach; persevere in this, and in this way you will save both yourself and those who listen to you”* (NJB). As I noted in the first chapter, I do not claim to have all and every truth on the topic neatly wound up and packaged. I will always encourage questions and comment that would help us all to come to a place of unity in our interpretation and improve this publication.

It has been startling for me to realise that the Greek word translated ‘save’ in the previous verse, *sōzō*, means saved in the sense of being delivered or protected. It has to do with being healed; preserved safe from danger; doing well; and being made whole (Strong, e-Sword). The basic meaning of this verb according to Zodhiates in his Word-Study, is to rescue from peril; to protect and keep alive. It involves the preservation of life, either physical or spiritual (e-Sword). Does this not remind one of Paul’s prayer that the Thessalonians’ whole spirit, and soul and body, might be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord? And does it not have a ring of John’s wish in the second verse of his Third Epistle, that Gaius might above all things prosper and be in health, even as his soul prospered?

Truth has two very important characteristics. It is, in the first place, not dependent on my or your recognition. It will remain truth irrespective of anyone’s attitude. In the second place, truth is not dependent upon my knowledge of it. It will remain the truth whether I have ever heard it or not.

I mentioned Andrew Wommack’s opinion earlier, that what we believe about the biblical position on soul and spirit will influence one’s total relationship with God. In this I agree with him to some extent. Where I disagree with Wommack

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***“Truth is timeless. Truth does not differ from one age to another, from one people to another, from one geographical location to another. Men’s ideas may differ, men’s customs may change, men’s moral codes may vary, but the great all-prevailing Truth stands for time and eternity.”***

(Billy Graham, 1984:29)

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and the others in the threefold teaching is their over-spiritualisation of concepts, and the way Scripture is presented to say what it does not (for example 2 Cor 5:17).

No service is rendered to the teaching of the truth by that. When we fall short of the New Testament we will always run the risk of falling into legalism. To go beyond it, however, opens us up to the danger of fanaticism. In the process people are creating new traditions. Is it any wonder then, that Paul issued such stern warnings as to rightly dividing the word of truth and not reading beyond what is written that I quoted at the start of this chapter? Equally, he warned against the empty speculations posed by false doctrine (1 Tim 1:3-11). He also declared that all Scripture was inspired by God, and was profitable for teaching, rebuking, and training in righteousness (2 Tim 3:10-17).

I have found that authors in the trichotomist fold often build on one another. This is not wrong in itself, but for the adding of error to error. May I remind us all once again of the example I used earlier from a sermon of Dr. Ravi Zacharias, about the watchmaker and factory timekeeper who were setting their timepieces by each other's error! Also, I have found that some authors repeated Watchman Nee's views, but without crediting the statements to him, and presenting it as if these were factual biblical concepts.

## REVIEW

During my study of this topic I realised that it has indeed received much scholarly attention through the centuries, but probably never more so than in the last five or six decades. The greater attention in this regard has seemingly been through books and seminars on emotional healing and spiritual warfare. These topics are not wrong in themselves, but for all the unbiblical excesses we encounter. In the end, my evaluation had to focus again on the fact that Scripture should be used in the first place to interpret Scripture. If this is not done, books and teaching of all kinds can be used to miss the truth, as I have found the position to be as far as many books within the aforementioned genre is concerned. The result is that many believers are confused and deceived, and they are confusing and deceiving others in the process, however sincere their intentions might be. I have been there!

Another young acquaintance of mine, for example, said after listening intently to my explanation of what I understand the biblical position is

on the soul, that he clearly understood what I had said. **Nonetheless**, he planned to continue using a little drama based on the threefold view in the youth camps he was involved with, because “*it worked very well.*” That, of course, is nothing less than compromise of biblical truth. Once we make a little compromise here and there, we will inevitably soon be faced with a new nuance of ‘truth’ all dressed up in biblical terminology.

One notable characteristic of the literature I studied is the apparent ignorance of the Hebraic mind and centuries-old understanding of the topic. Because the Scriptures were inspired by the Holy Spirit within the Hebrew culture, and because an understanding of the concepts of spirit and soul is accentuated by so many writers/teachers as being of critical importance for an understanding of the rest of Scripture, I have found in this position a definite gap in the knowledge base. This is especially so in popular modern literature and seminar workbooks. It needs to be realised that the non-academic readers (the group who above all doubt make up the major proportion of church membership) do not study academic theological textbooks. They rely to a large extent for their knowledge on the teaching of their (too many times, ignorant) leaders, television personalities, and on the popular books that have flooded the shelves of Christian bookstores. These include those bookstores that are housed within the building complexes of church congregations. When a church based bookstore sells a book, it will imply for many people that the church leadership agree with the doctrine or teaching it contains. A notice to the contrary on the bookshop walls may be understood to be a confession of compromise for the sake of money.

### **The stains of Greek philosophy**

If we consider the characteristics of the Hebrew language and the Hebraic mind in its application of concrete things to describe abstract concepts, it should be clear that plain and simple Western-minded explanations are often in danger of error. It is always necessary to apply sound, basic principles of interpretation to what we read. Context, in all its cultural, historical, geographical and literary facets, stands out as a sound point of departure, after which other principles should be considered (for example, the principles of first mention and single meaning). I believe I have illustrated clearly in this book how abominations have arisen just from ignorance of the Hebraic poetic concept

of parallelism. Research I conducted in congregations of various denominations during 2005, using a questionnaire, found that only 9% of the respondents indicated that they had personally made an intensive study of the Jewish cultural background of the Bible. 43% responded that they done so to a small extent, while 48% had not done so at all. If one considers in comparison, that 62% indicated they had been taught or studied the principles of Bible interpretation, one cannot help but wonder just what these principles were.

Another factor that has left a destructive trail on Joe Church's understanding of the Bible is the application of the techniques of Greek philosophy. I include myself as part and parcel of the Joe Churches.

Today I watch and listen to preachers and shudder at the way and extent in which they string verses from the Bible together to present a 'truth'. Not only that, but specific translations are used in questionable ways at times to serve a predetermined purpose. In other words, a preacher uses a specific translation for a sermon because that version seems to provide the correct translation (sometimes even word play) for his purpose. Consider Deuteronomy 23:2 as an example. The King James Version renders it thus:

A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the Lord.

The Holman Christian Standard Version uses "*No one of illegitimate birth (...)*", while The Amplified Bible has (...)*A person begotten out of wedlock (...)*." In Hebraic thought this command has nothing to do with a person born from a relationship between two unmarried people per se, but with one born from an incestuous or adulterous relationship. It may even include someone born from a prohibited marriage (between a Hebrew and a pagan in the Old Testament era).

In popular emotional healing and deliverance seminars and books, 'illegitimate' is understood in terms of the modern Western understanding of someone conceived out of wedlock. Therefore, the erroneous rendition of The Amplified Bible is the message the authors and seminar leaders convey. Admittedly, they declare Jesus has redeemed that sin and forgiveness has been granted to those who repent. But in the process a whole new and unbiblical ritual for which this verse is quoted as sanction, is followed. I have seen people leaving a seminar

wounded by this very thing that intended for them to receive emotional healing.

Another technique is to use only part of a verse, let alone putting it into its original contextual reality. In this way a whole new context is created. Worse still, in this way new ‘revelation’ is created.

It is not my purpose to deal with this topic in extensive detail, but I certainly wish to underline the fact that we can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to the damage that has been and is being done by all these techniques. Some denominations have over a long time included Philosophy as a compulsory subject in their undergraduate curriculum. Those that have not, still include the essence of it all in their curricula and their practical training. It may not even be formal, but can flow forth from mentorship. I have seen this happen time and time again.

Consider the example of one of the early ‘church fathers’, Origen, who was a Gentile Christian from Alexandria. He is noted for writing Bible commentaries for other Christians in the Greek speaking world. Origen regarded the Hebrew text and Hebraic themes as **raw data which needed to be interpreted using the tools of Greek understanding**. Steve Maltz (2009) writes of him:

A favourite theme of his was to re-interpret the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament, using techniques from Greek philosophy, married with insights from early Christian tradition and other writings. His driving principle was that the Bible contained three levels of meaning, corresponding to the body, soul and spirit. You can see the influence of Plato here, particularly when he adds that the ‘body’ level of meaning, the literal meaning of the text, is for the more simple minded whereas the ‘soul’ and more particularly the ‘spirit’ levels of meaning are for the more enlightened readers.

Augustine of Hippo followed later, and, building on the Bible interpretation techniques of Origen and others, he stated that readers were to look at the ‘spirit behind the literal texts’, to grasp the mind of God through ‘spiritual understandings’ (Maltz, 2009). When I think of the original doctrine of the apostles, and considering viewpoints such as the above of ‘church father’ Origen, I cannot help but regard the term ‘church fathers’ as a very unfortunate man-made creation indeed.

## Important Hebraic perspective

In the twofold view (dichotomy) the usage of the two terms ‘spirit’ and ‘soul’ in the context of the incorporeal (immaterial or invisible) part of the human constitution are generally synonymous. Their understanding is therefore that the human being is mostly described in the Bible as being composed of (1) body and (2) soul/spirit. When David, for example, goes before God he cries out “*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me (...)*” (Ps 103:1. See also Ps 104). He is not including the body in this context. The concepts of the heart and spirit are used in similar fashion:

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me (Ps 51:10).

Asaph follows the same approach in Psalm 78:8:

(That they) may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright, and whose spirit was not faithful to God.

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**Remember that the Hebrew language is a dynamic one in which many concepts are personified, and abstract concepts are presented in concrete images.**

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As you will understand by now, David is applying the poetic device of synonymous parallelism to state the same thing twice, but in different words. In these verses the soul, heart and spirit are in essence all the same. It describes the fullness of their inner being. David is crying out to God to exchange the error in him for the truth, to grant him

right thinking, right inclinations (Lamsa, 1985: 57). Asaph does likewise in his psalm.

**There is, however, a need to differentiate levels or dimensions or accentuations within the soul at times, otherwise it would become impossible to understand many parts of the Bible.** The Chassidic presentation provides an interesting model. This model describes the soul as having five identifiable dimensions. Of these, the *yechidah* is the highest dimension of the human soul and may have become lukewarm or insensitive to God (and certainly not dormant or dead) when Adam sinned. Such a focus would very definitely explain the very

deep “spiritual life” that unbelievers can experience – see for example Francis B. 2002. *Magus High Priest Of Satan In S. Africa: Phil Botha Receives Christ As Lord!* New York: Writers Club Press.

But since the expression *yechida* is not found in the Scriptures, it would not serve the cause of accurate scriptural understanding to follow that teaching. The Scriptures itself provides the answer in the three words used to describe dimensions of the human’s incorporeal or invisible life essence: *nephesh* (Greek: *psuche*), *ruach* (Greek: *pneuma*) and *neshamah* (Greek: *pnoe*). The *neshamah* or *pnoe* (Prov 20:27) would then be the one representing the part of man’s soul/spirit that is closest to God.

According to the Jewish Rabbinic perspective, humans are born morally pure; and they have no concept analogous to the original sin that influences some Christian doctrine (Wikipedia, 2007). The soul becomes polluted as one grows up. I personally align with this view. Nonetheless, I tested the understanding of Psalm 51:7 with a Jewish Rabbi. He replied that on this verse Rashi, the foremost Jewish biblical commentator commented that:

Behold, with iniquity I was formed. Now how could I not sin when the main part of my creation was through coitus, the source of many iniquities? Another explanation: The main part of my creation is from a male and a female, both of whom are full of iniquity.

Thus, although the soul is pure, our formation, as a whole, becomes polluted by negative influences. According to Jewish mysticism, the thoughts of one’s parents when the child is conceived creates the garments for the soul that is drawn down (Ask the Rabbi, Reference no. 706593, 2008).

### **Impact of second hand knowledge**

In acknowledging such different nuances, I deem it wise to guard against second hand knowledge that gives an impression of factuality through dressing it up in scriptural terminology. At the same time, the concepts one uses should be continually defined. As a young student in the political sciences in 1974, I had one professor, who was noted for his extremely advanced level of word usage. He constantly warned us that if one did not define your concepts clearly, you could easily

find yourself entangled in a jungle of semantic (word connotations) inaccuracy. This is exactly what I have found in the Christian environment, especially in the literature of authors who embrace the three-fold position on the constitutional make up of the human.

The following illustration by Dr. Ravi Zacharias also sounds appropriate warning: At the end of a one hour lecture he delivered in Moscow at the Lenin Military Academy, he was confronted by an officer who stated that Zacharias had been using the word *God* for the past hour: could he please explain what he meant by that term (Horton, 2006:339)!

I have come to the conclusion based on Scripture, that the incorporeal part of the human is the soul, which has various accents or characteristics, for example 'spirit', in the same way that God revealed Himself through the addition of different adjectives to His covenant name of Yahweh. Whether one calls on Yahweh Tsabaoth or Yahweh Shalom, for example, one is calling on the same Creator God, who was, and who is, and who is forever: it is only a different characteristic of Yahweh that is being accentuated, corresponding to the subject of the call or prayer and not a different God or a different name. However, we have a responsibility to rightly divide the context every time! I have not found a better example to explain the concept of the soul by than the **biblical picture of a lamp's flame**, with its different colours and temperature spots within the undividable single flame.

### **The spirit did not die**

As far as the position of man's spirit that supposedly died when Adam sinned is concerned, my understanding is that Scripture teaches the human was created for fellowship with God. Genesis 3:8 shows that God came to the Garden to walk and have fellowship with His human creation who was made after His own image. Adam did not first sin by eating of the forbidden fruit, but had already sinned by his disobedience, by breaking fellowship with God when he silently looked on as Eve was having a discourse with the serpent. Still God did not withdraw His presence from the human race completely. This is clear, for example, from the conversation between God and Cain. Only after killing his brother Abel, the Bible teaches that Cain was sent out from the presence of God.



Nowhere do we find the Scriptures teaching that the human spirit died when Adam sinned. That would imply the human is a 'dead man walking' in view of the threefold teaching that the human is a spirit. This idea is an assumption born of the necessity to explain the popular modern 'born again' doctrines, which are equally the product of reading above what is written.

The history of Abraham and Moses, among other things, illustrates a continued fellowship between God and man, but with few exceptions, man now had to take the initiative to seek God's presence. Enoch walked with God, for example; it was not the other way round (Gen 5:24). Moses had to go up the mountain or into the tent of meeting to meet with God. God did not come down to walk with man in the way He did in the beginning. However, restoration was given at Pentecost. Believers now received the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, the One who once more walks beside man! Scripture does not teach that man received a new personal incorporeal life entity or 'spirit' or that a 'dead spirit' became resurrected.

### **The book of Hebrews refutes trichotomy**

It is ironic that, whereas one of the two main verses of Scripture on which the trichotomist (threefold) teaching of the human constitution is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews (4:12), the strongest refutation of that teaching also comes from this Epistle:

For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an **anchor of the soul**, both sure and steadfast, and **which entereth into that within the veil**; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made a high priest ever after the order of Melchiz'edek (Heb 6:13-20, KJV).

The Scriptures version renders verse 19, “*as an anchor of the life*”; the Complete Jewish Bible has, “*as a sure and safe anchor for ourselves*”; and the Holman Christian Standard Bible keeps to “*anchor of the soul.*” If we applied the trichotomist explanation of the soul’s composition to this, it would imply the entry of Jesus the Christ into the sanctuary behind the veil provided us with an anchor for our mind, will and emotions. Clearly, this is not what the Epistle is saying. We would also have to understand Matthew 10:28 as a reference by Jesus to the killing of a person’s mind, will and emotions, whereas His words had a much greater meaning. Thus, we simply see again that one might get away with inaccuracy or error in some instances, but you will invariably fall into the need of spiritual philosophising in other instances, in an effort to save the credibility of views that are in error.

I believe that I have shown with the variety of applications or meanings of the expression ‘spirit’, that it is of critical importance to be positioned painfully correctly in terms of context. To do less is to run the risk of error.

### **Paul’s understanding and approach**

What about Paul then? He certainly seems to have shown bias for the concept of the ‘spirit’ (*pneuma*). Apart from once again pointing out the interchangeability of the two expressions ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’, and the considerable variety of meanings they are used in, I personally understand that Paul was simply acting out his declared philosophy:

For although I am free from all people, I have made myself a slave to all, in order to win more people. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law – though I myself am not under the law – to win those under the law. To those who are outside the law, like one outside the law. To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some. Now I do all this because of the gospel, that I may become a partner in its benefits. (HCSB)

Simply put, I believe that Paul was speaking the language of those he was addressing. We need to remember that his letters were written to Gentiles (or at least a mixed group) who were either Greek them-

selves, or had been living under the influence of Greek culture and philosophies.

### **Caution when using the expression ‘spiritual’**

In view of the aforementioned, caution also needs to be exercised when one uses the term ‘spiritual’. Dictionaries (e.g. The Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus, 1995) describe the term to refer, inter alia, to things concerned with the soul or spirit, not with material or external reality. It may be understood as reference to the immaterial and therefore invisible essence of the human constitutional nature. The context may, however, indicate the instances where it specifically applies to the soul’s affections as influenced (guided or inspired) by the Holy Spirit, or sense of belonging to the invisible (spiritual) realm and embodying or manifesting the ‘Spirit’.

This usage is rooted in the acceptance that there is a realm transcending or going beyond the human’s natural senses which can only perceive the physical world. Ebrard, quoted by Vincent (e-Sword), describes it as a connection with surrounding objects wherein the senses are suspended, and so a connection with the invisible world takes place. Plato’s very simple definition (in the same source) describes it as a **divine release from the ordinary ways of men**, to which I would add as a prerequisite for believers in Christ: by or under the guidance or leading of the Holy Spirit. I think I clearly showed in the previous chapter that the biblical concept of spirituality is not as vague and abstract as some present it to be. Neither is it based on some form of ghost-like behaviour.

And the LORD GOD formed man [of] the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7, KJV).

Then the LORD GOD formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being (Gen. 2:7, HCSB).

(...) and Yihweh of Elohiym molded the human of powder from the ground and he exhaled in his nostrils a breath of life and the human existed for a being of life (Benner, 2006, Mechanical Translation).

We have seen that the Hebrew language is very different from other languages in its ability to explain much in a few words. Also, we have seen the Hebraic way of personification of abstract concepts, as well as the wide range of meanings and nuances that words such as *nephesh* (Greek: *psyche*) and *ruach* (Greek: *pneuma*) are applied in. Then the reality of a third word that is also translated as either soul or spirit, namely *neshamah* (Greek: *pnoe*) was underlined. Lastly, Hebrew is a language of action, it does not have a passive nature. The word *nephesh* is one such a word of many meanings and nuances and demand very clear understanding of context wherever it is found.

Although this word is first used in Genesis 1:20, it is used of living creatures in that context. In accordance with the basic meaning of the word as ‘breath’, this text properly denotes ‘breathing creatures’.

This essence of breath is found throughout Hebraic thought and understanding of *nephesh*. As those who are breathing have ‘life’, one of the meanings for *nephesh* is ‘life’. We use the body to breathe with, and thus we find another meaning for *nephesh* is ‘body’. A dead body was once a live and breathing one and therefore ‘dead body’ becomes another meaning for *nephesh*. Although these are all different meanings, they all come from this one root word, *nephesh* (Pickle, 2008).

In its very essence then, Genesis 2:7 states that God breathed the breath of life into the man He had formed, and the man became a living or breathing being. Tertullian (155 – 222 AD), a church leader and prolific author of early Christianity wrote the following, which is clearly based on this understanding.

*“But indeed to live is to breathe, and to breathe is to live. Therefore this entire process, both of breathing and living, belongs to that to which living belongs – that is, to the soul.”* He stated also that, *“Precisely like the wind blown in the pipes throughout the organ, the soul displays its energies in various ways by means of the senses, being not indeed divided, but rather distributed in natural order”*(Schaff, 1885).

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**To live is to breathe,  
and to breathe is to  
live. (Tertullian).**

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In considering Tertullian’s views I am reminded of the only example in the Bible of a picture of the human soul – that of a lamp or candle (Proverbs 20:27). The lamp or candle can only give light (or live) when its flame is burning, and the flame can only burn (or live) when

it is fed by the oil in the lamp or candle. The flame has many colours and even different temperature spots. Yet not one can be divided from the others. All of these invariably function together; they are one undividable whole.

The characteristics may change though. The flame has a blue part, which is the purest, having the most oxygen in the process of burning (or living). The other colours come from impurities in the lamp oil or candle. If one can eliminate all, or even just some impurities from the oil or candle, the flame will have a blue colour to larger extent. If the human feeds his soul, which is his whole being, the ‘who’ he is, with the things of God, that part of his soul that reaches out to God will be larger and stronger. The ‘eyes of the heart’ will see much clearer in the spiritual or incorporeal realm. Conversely, feeding the soul with worldly impurities will have the opposite effect.

There are times, however, when *nephesh* is used in a context which describes only the flame – the inner man and not the whole. Psalm 103:1 is such an example:

My soul, praise the Lord, and all that is within me, praise His holy name (HCSB)

This view is in harmony with the basic Hebraic view of the human as an ‘inner self’ and ‘outer appearance’, with *nephesh* being the term depicting the inner self and *shem* or ‘name’ depicting the outer person or reputation (Vine, et.al., 1996).

It therefore seems that the Biblical perspective embraces a monistic view of the human at first mention. However, the Bible most certainly seems to apply the term soul in a dichotomist (twofold) sense too – the accurate meaning would be determined by the context at hand. In referring to God’s soul (Lev 26:11; Isa 42:1; and Jer 6:8), and to man as becoming a living soul (Gen 2:7), we most certainly have a monistic foundation. Ezekiel 18:4 and 20, which states that the sinning soul shall die, is obviously also monistic – it refers to the person, the whole living being. On the other hand, Psalm 103:1 which I quoted above as an example, can be dichotomist and so is Matthew 10:28 (yet, bear in mind the Hebrew poetic principle of parallelism):

Don't fear those who kill the body but are not able to kill the soul; rather, fear Him who is able to destroy both [in other words two] soul and body in hell (HCSB)

Like the term 'soul', we have seen that the term 'spirit' also presents a considerable variety of meanings, which demands that the context of its usage is rightly divided in each case. Among the usages is the application of 'spirit' or *ruach* (Greek: *pneuma*) as a synonym for 'soul' and in the sense of the 'inner self'. I have not yet been able to identify a situation in which it was used in similar sense as Genesis 2:7. Ignorance of the Hebraic poetic concept of parallelism has most certainly been responsible for a lot of twisted teaching.

In view of the knowledge I gained by my study of the concepts of the soul and spirit, I can no longer agree, as I used to for many years, with the trichotomist or threefold position of man as being a spirit, having a soul and living in a body. Acknowledging the complexity of human nature, I have concluded that, at first mention in Genesis 2:7, the Bible indicates a unity, a wholeness called 'soul', and which includes the body. The soul is presented here as the whole of the person, a unity of body, breath and mind. It represents the whole human being.

There are contexts, however, where the concept of the soul is used with reference to the human's invisible, incorporeal life essence. It is essential for any reader to position him- or herself accurately as to the context at hand.

There is no Biblical substance for the trichotomist or threefold teaching. It is based on very selective interpretation approaches and comes down to extreme spiritual philosophising. Although some of its proponents would point out some differences, trichotomist teaching really comes down again to one of the teachings that the apostle John opposed so strongly (The Word In Life Study Bible, 1996).

Let me end this discussion with some more quotations from Tertullian in view of those teachers who teach and illustrate using cut-out figurines, that at death the body is buried, while the soul and spirit may go two separate ways:

Being thus single, simple, and entire in itself, it is as incapable of being composed and put together from external constituents, as it is of being divided in and of itself, For if it had been possible to

construct it and to destroy it, it would no longer be immortal. Since, however, it is not mortal, it is also incapable of dissolution and division. Now, to be divided means to be dissolved, and to be dissolved means to die.”

Well, then, since you separate the spirit (or breath) and the soul, separate their operations also. Let both of them accomplish some act apart from one another – the soul apart, the spirit apart. Let the soul live without the spirit; let the spirit breathe without the soul. Let one of them quit men’s bodies, let the other remain; let death and life meet and agree. If indeed the soul and spirit are two, they may be divided; and thus, by the separation of the one which departs from the one which remains, there would accrue the union and meeting together of life and of death. But such a union never will accrue: therefore they are not two, and they cannot be divided; but divided they might have been, if they had been (two).

Whenever, indeed, the question is about soul and spirit, the soul will be (understood to be) itself the spirit, just as the day is the light itself. For a thing is itself identical with that by means of which itself exists (Tertullian, in Schaff, 1885).

A ‘spiritual man’ is simply someone who welcomes the Holy Spirit’s guidance in his daily walk, in contrast to the ‘natural man’ who relies upon human wisdom, intellectual prowess, and intuitive faculties, but will not value divine guidance or revelation. It is not achieved by a monastic lifestyle, and also does not demand the manifestation of miraculous gifts as a precondition, but by what one feeds his soul with. The spiritual man or woman will be characterised by a yielding attitude (spirit) that longs more than anything else to obey God. Such a person will set his or her mind on the godly things above the worldly things. It is not achieved by an over-spiritualised view of 2 Corinthians 5:17, but by determined effort which demands a right attitude (or ‘spirit’). Paul’s exhortation in Ephesians 4:17- 5:21, for example, is clear in this regard: *“You took off...you put on...you put away...don’t let...don’t grieve...walk as...don’t participate.”*

James too among others, writing to the twelve Jewish tribes in the Dispersion, was very clear in his description (Jas. 3:13-18):

Who is wise and understanding among you? He should show his good works by good conduct with wisdom's gentleness. But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your heart, don't brag and lie in defiance of the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every kind of evil. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peace-loving, gentle, compliant, full of mercy and good fruits, without favoritism and hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace (HCSB).

You may well ask about the place of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that Paul described in 1 Corinthians 12. I have found nothing in the Bible declaring or even suggesting that they do not apply to the generations living today. At the same time, I have been witness to gross abuse and manipulation in this regard too. We all need to test our questions against the Scriptures. And even then we can be misled by others, whether wilfully or through sincere error. Every one of us has the responsibility to rightly divide the Word of Truth if we are to use that Word as our guiding light (Ps 119:105).

### CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

As I noted in the foreword, the roots of this book lie in an intended two pages definition of the human as being a spirit, having a soul, and living in a body. This intention, noble as it might have been was soon shaken and this book is only one of the results. Despite the wide ranging discussion I have tried to present, I have no illusion that there may still be doubts and questions in the reader's mind. That I understand. The ideal would be to present a complete verse by verse commentary on every usage of *nephesh/psyche*, *ruach/pneuma*, and *neshamah/pnoe* in the Bible. That, however, has not been the purpose of this book.

If I have been able with it to stimulate in the reader a renewed focus on the simple principles needed to rightly divide the Word of Truth, I would be satisfied that I have been able in some small way, to make a contribution as a facilitator of true understanding. There should also be no doubt in the reader's mind that I too am in a new learning curve. It is not about 'knowing the Bible', or about an ability like some preachers and teachers to machine gun strings of Bible verses to their



audiences, but about knowing the Word of Truth! It is about getting rid in our knowledge, in our teaching and our preaching, of the stubborn stains of Greek philosophical techniques!

Lastly, this book is about a reclaiming of our Biblical mind in understanding of who we are, and not about what twisted philosophical techniques want us to think we are. Having said that, I see no reason why those who claim successful ministry, for example in the areas of emotional healing and deliverance, built on the threefold interpretation cannot do so successfully by building on the understanding I have presented and which I believe is based on the true Biblical meaning of the expressions soul and spirit. And I see in their ministries, albeit built on inaccurate interpretation and spiritual philosophising of the biblical text, once again the grace of our Father God, who looks upon the heart of man, and not upon the accuracy of his words. But, whereas our languages are unable to present many Hebraic meanings by single words, let us then use the original expression *neshamah*, for example, if that is what we mean and not an unbiblical, redefined use of the word 'spirit'.

### **The nutshell summary**

After walking through so many variants of doctrine and applications of the constitutional nature of the human, and considering both the Old and New Testament teaching in this regard, I have come to the conclusion and understanding that the biblical position can be summarised as follows:

- The human being is a living soul. The soul is primarily the whole of the person; a unity of the body, breath and mind. It is all of you.
- There are times when, considered within the specific context, the Bible distinguishes the invisible life essence, the inner self, of the human by the same term, soul, or its synonym, spirit.
- 'Soul' (Hebrew: *nephesh*, and Greek: *psyche*) and 'spirit' (Hebrew: *ruach*, and Greek: *pneuma*) are used interchangeably many times. This is found especially in the application of the poetic device known as parallelism.
- In some contexts, especially in the New Testament, the translation 'spirit', may be used to signify the highest dimension within the soul, namely that of the *neshamah* (Hebrew) or *pnou* (Greek). It signifies that part of the soul that is closest to its Creator.

- The word ‘spirit’ is used often in various other senses, including the concept of someone’s attitude.

(...) for man is headed to his eternal home, and mourners will walk around in the street (;..) and the dust returns to the earth as it once was, and the spirit [soul] returns to God who gave it (Eccl 12:5c, 7; HCSB).

For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16; HCSB).

According to the natural sciences energy cannot be destroyed. When it disappears from a system, it has simply moved on to another one (Wikipedia, 2011). In like manner, and according to the Bible, when the life essence of the human, the soul, leaves its earthly system or body, it is translated to another dimension, which I believe is His full, personal, boundary free and everlasting realm.





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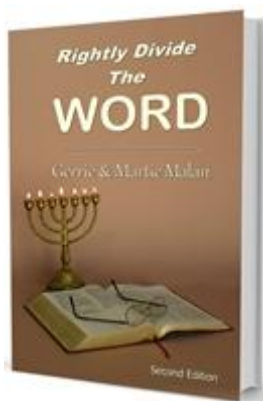
He holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from Unisa, and a doctorate in Theology from Calvary University. Gerrie has co-authored two books in Penology, and numerous study guides in Correctional Management. This was his first book in the theological field and developed out of one chapter of his doctoral thesis. He and Martie, his wife of more than 44 years, currently reside in the town of Hibberdene in the KwaZulu Natal Province of South Africa. They have three married children and six grandchildren.

He can be contacted through his website:  
<http://www.hoseaconnection.org>



## OTHER BOOKS BY THE AUTHOR

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### RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD

**GERRIE & MARTIE MALAN**

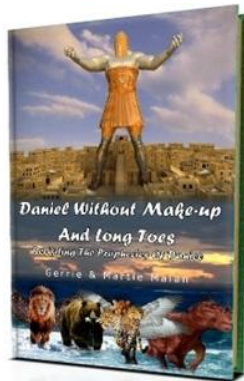
With this book the authors have focused on presenting a book for the average reader of the Bible, to facilitate a true and accurate understanding of the Scriptures. They discuss a number of basic, yet important principles to bear in mind when reading the Bible and point out the many distortions that pagan philosophical practices have led to, as well as errors flowing from subjectivity in translations of the Bible. A few important terms and expressions are discussed in the last chapter to illustrate why rightly dividing the word of truth is deemed so critical. **This is a free ebook** and can be downloaded from [www.smashwords.com/books/view/376734](http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/376734).



## SNY DIE WOORD REGUIT

**GERRIE & MARTIE MALAN**

This is the Afrikaans version of *Rightly Divide The Word*. **This is also a free ebook.** Download from [www.smashwords.com/books/view/376749](http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/376749).



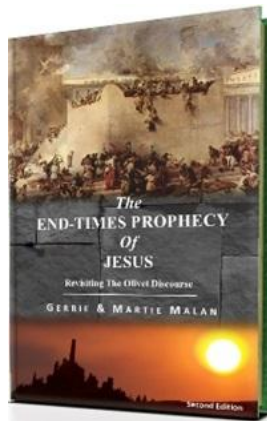
## DANIEL WITHOUT MAKE-UP OR LONG TOES

*(The Prophecies Of Daniel Revisited)*

**GERRIE & MARTIE MALAN**

End-times prophecies have been brought to the people's attention by the electronic media to an extent never thought possible a few decades

ago. And most of these are rooted in some measure, in the biblical book of Daniel. Even if you should eventually decide that you do not agree with the authors' view, you will find the search for the simple truth in the book of Daniel stimulating. They tried throughout their study to strip the Daniel message of the pollution by all kinds of philosophy through the centuries (the make-up) and also specifically identified artificial insertions (the long toes of the so-called 'church age'). Throughout, they weighed the Daniel prophecies against recorded history. In the process important distortions in modern end-times doctrines are exposed.

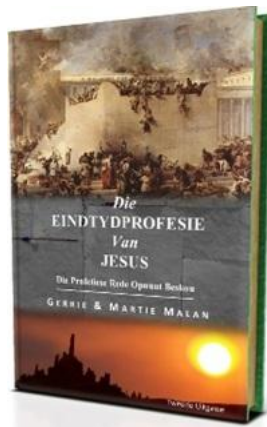


**THE END-TIMES PROPHECY OF JESUS**  
*(Revisiting The Olivet Discourse)*  
**GERRIE & MARTIE MALAN**

The electronic and other media have had a profound impact on the distribution of knowledge throughout the world. Knowledge of Bible teaching in various formats has been experiencing the same impact. One can specifically highlight the biblical end-times, in view of the numerous contemporary books and films or DVD's on such topics and man's natural interest in this regard through the centuries. Because Jesus of Nazareth is on record as God's ultimate prophet, it is inevitable that His end-times prophecy would assume an important place in



all the sermons, teachings, books and multimedia that have been created on these topics. With this book the authors have revisited the end-times prophecy of Jesus as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. They have focussed on studying every section of the prophecy within the context that the original readers and audiences would have understood to be involved. At the same time their focus remained on presenting a relative concise book with the average reader as priority instead of a voluminous academic one. It is a book that is certain to stimulate a willingness to search for the biblical truth, especially in view of the many attempts to question the reliability of the Bible. The outcome might surprise many.



**DIE EINDTYDPROFESIE VAN JESUS**  
*(Die Profetiese Rede Opnuut Beskou)*

**GERRIE & MARTIE MALAN**

The Afrikaans version of *The End-times Prophecy Of Jesus*.

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**Author's profile and book pages:  
[www.smashwords.com/profile/view/hoseacon](http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/hoseacon)**