LESSON 3

The Nature of Man

As a foundation for the Christian life, one's doctrine of man is exceeded in importance only by his doctrine of God. And these two doctrines are closely interrelated. For example, man cannot be understood apart from his relation to God. Ultimately God alone knows what man is and He alone can reveal man to himself.

Man cannot be understood apart from his relation to _____ _____.

(God)

Wholeness

One of the most basic aspects of that revelation is that man is an indivisible whole. We may think of him as a body or as a soul or spirit, but these two—body and soul—belong together. These aspects of man's being are like two sides of a coin. On one side, the body, man is identified with nature and is subject to the physical and physiological laws of the natural order. His life is a "running towards death." On the other side of his being, he is related to the eternal or immaterial world. While running towards death he, at least potentially, is also running towards life in its fulness.

The whole man includes _____ and _____.

(body, soul)

As a spiritual being, man is capable of standing above and apart from nature. This capacity distinguishes man, so far as we know, from all the remainder of God's creation. This is one source of his "grandeur." On the other hand, the fact that he can never completely escape his relatedness to the natural order is a source of many of his problems and perplexities.

The thing that distinguishes man from the rest of God's creation is his _____ capacity.

(spiritual)

There is something within man that causes him to reach for the stars, but at the same time he finds that his feet are set in the concrete of his own physical nature. To change the figure, man has one foot solidly planted on the earth and the other at least lifted in the direction of the eternal. He is a "child of earth" and of "the starry heaven," a curious compound of "stardust and common clay."

The preceding suggests that man is an antithesis, but in the deepest sense he is a synthesis. There may seem to be a conflict between his body and his spirit, between his reach and his grasp, but these are blended into one person. This one person may not be perfectly unified; his wholeness may be incomplete; it may remain a potentiality rather than a reality, but at least deep within him there is a hunger or an outreach for wholeness.

Deep within man there is a hunger or an _____ for _____.

(outreach, wholeness)

Man's failure to attain perfect wholeness or completeness stems not only from his finiteness but also from his sinfulness. Sin separates him from God, the only perfectly whole Person. Even after he has come into the spiritual family of God through his union with Christ, man is still plagued with his sinful nature. His conflict with God and within himself is not entirely eliminated.

Some people have sought to read a thoroughgoing dualism into Paul's view of man. Paul speaks of a conflict between the

flesh and the spirit (see Romans 8). It seems clear, however, that "flesh" for Paul does not mean the body as such. Rather, it refers to the fleshy or carnal nature which is in conflict with the spiritual nature. This is an inner conflict that affects the total person.

For Paul, and from the Christian perspective in general, the total person by nature is in rebellion against God. In this sense, we can properly speak of the total depravity of man. It does not mean that man is as depraved as he can be; it simply means that man as a person, spirit or soul as well as body, is depraved or is affected by sin. In other words, man the person cannot be compartmentalized for the assessment of responsibility for sin. This also means that when man, through union with Christ, becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus, the total man is saved. In other words, the "souls" of men are not saved, men as persons are saved. Just as the total person is involved in sin, so the total person is involved in salvation from the power and penalty of sin.

A mistake made by many who seek to relieve some human need or solve some basic human problem is the compartmentalization of the lives of men. Frequently an effort is made to minister to their physical, mental, or spiritual needs without a proper regard for the other needs of their lives. Man is a person, and if he is to be ministered to most effectively, he must be ministered to as a total person and not as a body or soul.

Image of God

No concept concerning man is more significant for human relations and for the Christian life in general than the fact that man was created in the image or likeness of God. It is the image of God in man that makes him a "thou" instead of an "it," one who counts rather than one to be counted, one who has a name rather than a mere number.

What is meant when it says that man was created in the image of God? Basically it means that since God is a Person, man is a person. A person can say to himself, "I am, I ought, I will." In other words, a person has a sense of self-consciousness, a convicton of moral responsibility, and the capacity of self-determination.

No one idea is more central in the concept of the image than the fact that inherent in the image is a call or a summons to communicate with other persons. There is no person without other persons. It is no mere accident that Robinson Crusoe was a fictitious character, and even he had his man Friday. Man cannot find fulfilment for that which is basic in his nature without other persons. On the highest level, he finds this fulfilment in communion with God. Man alone of God's created beings has the capacity for an I-Thou relation not only with his fellowman but also with God. He has the ability to respond to God's self-disclosure or self-communication. Also, consciously or unconsciously, he has a deep hunger for such communication.

Another perspective concerning the meaning of the image of God in man is that man was created as God's representative in the world. Human monarchs set up images of themselves in their kingdoms. God has set man in the world as His image, a live rather than a dead image. As the representative of God, man is a

The total person by nature is in _____

_____

(rebellion against God)

The total person is saved from the _____ *and* _____ *of sin.*

(power, penalty)

The image of God in man means that he is a _____.

(person)

As the representative of God, man is a symbol of God's

symbol of God's presence in the world. Unfortunately, man too frequently has exalted himself to the place that properly belongs to God, and at times he has attempted to create God in his image. However, when man does that, he ultimately debases rather than exalts himself. The thing that gives man his real stature and standing is his relatedness to God.

As God's representative in the world, man can be an intermediary or a mediator between God and the remainder of God's creation. Created in the image of God, man stands where the world of matter meets the world of spirit. He stands on the horizon between time and eternity, with the capability of speaking for eternity to time. He is a synthesis of the finite and the infinite. Belonging to the infinite as well as the finite, man dominates the very world that dwarfs him. The universe may crush him, but he is greater than the universe because he knows when he is being crushed.

So far we have been considering, in the main, man in his original created state. But all men have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Pascal speaks of the grandeur of man but also of his misery. Man's grandeur is the fact that he was created in the image or likeness of God; his misery is that through sin that image has been marred or defaced. But even the misery of fallen man reflects, to some degree, his grandeur or greatness. At least man knows that he is miserable. It may be miserable to know one's wickedness, but it is great to know that one is miserable. Pascal suggests that no one is unhappy at not being a king except a deposed king. Man's miseries are the miseries of a dethroned monarch. The dethroned monarch is the image of God.

Does the preceding mean that the image of God has been completely lost or destroyed? Quite evidently the answer is no. At least man retains the potential for communication with God. There is enough of the image left to serve as an "antenna of the soul," as an awareness of "a paradise lost." It serves as a point of contact for the gospel message. Otherwise our preaching and witnessing would be in vain.

The potential for fellowship with God, which even sinful man retains, largely explains the eternal restlessness of man. At the centre of man's being, there is a dialectical tension. He was created in the image of God, and yet he is a slave of sin. Sin has not only separated him from God but also from the depths of his own being. There is disunity within him rather than unity. Nevertheless, he longs for unity within himself and with God. He has an insatiable thirst for the Eternal. Whether he is aware of it or not, man is homesick for God.

If the image or likeness of God has not been destroyed, what has happened to it? It has been marred, defaced, or to use an expression of Calvin, it has been "fearfully deformed." In other words, man's true essence, which stems from or can be identified with the image of God, has been corrupted but not destroyed.

This marred or defaced image can be and is restored when man is brought into union with Christ who is "the likeness of God" (2 Cor. 4:4), "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15),and who "bears the very stamp" or the "flawless expression" (Ph.) of the nature of God (Heb. 1:3). He is the exact re-

_____ *in the* _____.

(presence, world)

Man stands where the world of _____ *meets the world of* _____.

(matter, spirit)

Man's grandeur is his creation in the _____ *of God.*

Man's misery is that sin has _____ *the image of God within him.*

(image, marred)

Sin has not only separated man from God, but also from the depths of his _____.

(own, being)

The marred image can be and is restored when man is brought into _____

production of the Father. He himself said, "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). The restored image becomes a reality or is actualized in our lives as we live in fellowship with the One who fully embodies that image.

The restoration of the image of God through our union with the One who is the full or complete image of the Father establishes right relations with God, with one's self, and with others. It unites or unifies that which has been fragmented or separated. But the restoration of the image also gives us a deepened insight into the meaning and significance of the image. This, in turn, results in a clearer understanding of sin and a deepened consciousness of sin in our lives. It seems that the more the image has been restored in one's life, the more aware he is of his failure to realize fully the image of God in his life.

The preceding means that the restoration of the image is never complete. We "are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor. 3:18). We "have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Col. 3:10). We have been changed, but we are also in the process of being changed. The image of God has been restored, but it is also in the process of being restored. As Kierkegaard suggests, man can only be *"on the way,"* but he must continually be in the process of "becoming." To use a Bultmann concept, the Christian life is always an intention and a quest.

(union with Christ)

Restoration of the image of God establishes right relations with _____, with one's _____, and with _____.

(God, self, others)

We have been changed, but we are also in the _____ of being _____.

(process, changed)

Dignity and Worth

The companion facts that man was created in the image of God and that Christ died to restore that image give to man his worth and dignity, a conception that is an underlying assumption of both Testaments. And let us never forget that worth and dignity belong to man as such: to men and women, black or white, old and young, rich and poor, clean and dirty, educated and uneducated, wise and foolish, moral and immoral. No man has ever gone so high or so low that he has not been created in the image of God and that Christ has not died for him.

As implied, the high value placed on man is not inherent in man except as he is related to God. Separate him from God, and he belongs to the natural order or the animal world. Man is of infinite value only because he has been created in the image of God, the Infinite Person. And, incidentally, the Incarnation, a part of the process to restore the image of God in man, lifted the dignity of man to its highest level.

The dignity and worth of man mean, among other things, that no man, group of men, nation, or social institution should ever manipulate or use man as a mere means. He should always be treated as an end of infinite value. This should be just as true of one man as of another, of black as well as white, of poor as well as rich.

It is doubtful if there is any concept more central in our Western way of life than the high value placed on the individual person. But let us repeat that this high value of man is derived from his actual or potential relation to God. Divorce man from God and you separate him from his source of value. Sooner or later he will lose respect not only for his fellowman but also for

List two things that give man worth and dignity.

_____

_____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Why does man have infinite value?

_____

_____

Man should always be treated as an end of _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

himself. This is the source of much of "man's inhumanity to man."

God himself respects the human person. He has created man in His own image; He will not violate that image. One aspect or expression of that image is the freedom of man. Someone has asked if God did not tremble when He created man with the freedom to say "yes" and "no" even to his Creator. Man has been called "the risk of God." But God had to take that risk if man was to be man. God wants man to cooperate with Him in His work in the world but the cooperation must be voluntary. He will not override or force the will of man even to restore the marred or deformed image. Man must freely repent of his sins and open his heart to the resurrected Christ.

There is a glorious companion fact to the idea that God never treats man as a mere means. That fact or truth is that man may voluntarily make himself available to God to be used by Him as a means to extend His rule, reign, or kingdom in the world. Our Christian faith places a high value on the individual person, but when properly understood it places as great if not a greater premium upon self-denial and self-sacrifice for the sake of others and particularly for the sake of the purposes of God. This idea is an integral phase of the Christian conception of individualism. The wonderful thing about it is that man finds his greatest freedom and his most complete fulfilment as he voluntarily gives himself in service to God and man. There is no greater or more central truth in the teachings of Jesus than the fact that one finds life by losing it for His sake (Matt. 16:25).

God Himself respects the _____ _____.

Man's cooperation with God must be _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

According to Jesus in Matthew 16:25, how can man find his greatest fulfilment and freedom? _____

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Equality and Inequality

Is it self-evident that all men are created equal? The answer to this question is tremendously important for human relations and in a particular way for those relations in the contemporary world.

It seems relatively clear that men are both equal and unequal. Their equality and their inequality are both grounded in the creative work of God. Their equality stems from the fact that they are all created in the image of God. There is equality of dignity and rights accompanied by diversity or inequality of functions. The equality of men is a constant, their inequality a variant.

There are various ways in which men are not equal. They are not equal in physical strength and stamina, in mental capacity and alertness, in moral stability and character, or in spiritual discernment and sensitivity. No two human beings are exactly alike. Even identical twins are not completely identical. The fact that no two finger prints are alike is symbolic of the fact that men are characterized by variety instead of uniformity. There are many factors that contribute, to varying degrees, to this diversity or uniqueness. Among these are heredity, environment, sex, race, nationality, and temperament.

Although there is uniqueness and inequality among men, the equality of all is more significant for Christian living. Equality and equal rights are primary; differences and inequalities may be important but they are secondary. Whatever may be the differences in abilities and in functions of men, they are equal in all

Men are both _____ *and* _____.

(equal, unequal)

List five ways in which people are not equal.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Equality and equal rights are _____.

(primary)

that is essential in being a man.

Motor cars may differ considerably in their appearance and the way they function, but they have common characteristics that make all of them identifiable as motor cars. So it is with men. And from the Christian perspective being a man is such an important thing that differences between men, even their inequalities, are insignificant in comparison.

All men belong to one human family. They are one by creation. This does not mean sameness. Under God there is unity in diversity. There is one human race composed of many races. The Christian community includes a wide variety of persons from diverse races and cultures. They are, however, one community. All of us within the community stand before God on the common ground of our creatureliness and of our redemption through union with Christ. We are one in creation and in re-creation.

Men are one by _____.

(creation)

Men are equal before God because God is equally the God of all: Jew and Gentile, male and female, employee and employer, black and white. Those in the spiritual family of God are all equally children of His. He is concerned about all and shares His love with all. A deep and an abiding sense of their equality before God is the only solid hope for equality of men before their fellowmen.

What do the following Scriptures teach?

Rom. 10:12 _____

_____

1 Cor. 12:13 _____

_____

Gal. 2:6 _____

_____

Col. 3:11 _____

_____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The concept of the equality of men is very prominent in the Scriptures, but particularly in the New Testament. Jesus, who came to reveal the Father, proved over and over again that He was impartial or no respecter of persons. The "no partiality" lesson was a difficult one for His disciples to learn, even as it remains a difficult lesson for many of us in the contemporary period. It was only after prejudiced Peter had had a vision on a housetop and had had some convincing conversation in the house of Cornelius that he was ready to say, "Truly I perceive [I see it quite plainly, Moffatt] that God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34). Paul stated specifically or implied the "no partiality" principle in many places (see Rom. 10:12; 1Cor. 12:13; Gal. 2:6; Col. 3:11). His statement in Galatians 3:28 is particularly pointed: "There is no room for Jew or Greek, no room for slave or freeman, no room for male or female, for you are all one through union with Christ Jesus" (Wm.). Notice the words "there is no room," which is a simple statement of fact.

James applies the "no partiality" or "no-respecter-of-persons" principle in a very pointed way to the Church (see 2:1–9). The immediate application is to the treatment of the rich and poor but the general principle, which is stated twice (vv. 1, 9), would apply to any human distinctions based on sex, age, culture, or colour. And the principle applies not only to the Church as the body of Christ but also to members of the body. We not only stand before God as equals, we also stand before one another as equals.

The "no partiality" principle applies not only to the church but also to _____ *of the* _____.

(members, body)

The equality principle is not only important in the Church but also in political structures. There should be equality not only in the presence of God but also in the presence of Caesar. This will be true if Caesar recognizes that he stands before God with those who stand before him.

Relation to the Community

There is validity in Kierkegaard's idea of the "solitary in-

dividual," standing apart from the crowd in the sanctuary of his own soul, face to face with the Eternal. But man does not always stand alone in the presence of the Eternal. Many times he stands there in company of others. Even when he withdraws to "the sanctuary of his own soul" he cannot escape the questioning voice of the Eternal: "Where is your brother?"

The preceding means, among other things, that the community is grounded in and evolves from the nature of man. The diversity of gifts and functions of men necessitates the community. Many of the needs of the individual must be met by others. For example, the husband and the wife need one another. They belong to one another, and each finds his or her fulfilment with the other in the community of the home.

Human communities evolve, however, from the nature of man in a deeper and more positive way. There can be no person without other persons, no "I" without a "Thou." Karl Barth suggests that God wills that man's being should find fulfilment in the relationship or the togetherness of I and thou. He says that God calls man "to find himself by affirming the other, to know joy by comforting the other, and self-expression by honouring the other."[1]

In other words, man finds his fulfilment as a person in communication with other persons. The ultimate expression of this fulfilment is in his communion with God, but it also finds expression in his relation to his fellowmen in the human community and as a Christian in the Christian community. Man's need for communion or fellowship is the basis for communities of all types.

Although man as a person is dependent on the community, he also stands apart from the community. This dual truth stems from his divine-human nature. Belonging to the earthly or natural order he is dependent on the community, but belonging to the spiritual or transcendent order he is independent of the community. The highest point of reference in his life is God. It is God who speaks the final authoritative word to the one who has been created in His image.

The individual is so dependent, however, on the community that unbridled individualism is destructive of the best interest of the individual and the community. Both the person and the community of persons are necessary for human existence. Neither should be considered merely instrumental. Each functions for and finds fulfilment in the other. Each has both rights and responsibilities. This is true of all the communities to which the individual may belong: the play or work group, the family, the church, the neighbourhood, the nation, and the world. And it should be remembered that the rights of these communities do not derive exclusively from the persons who belong to them. The basic God-ordained communities have some inherent rights as well as responsibilities.

There are limitations, however, of the rights of the group or community just as there are limitations of the rights of the individual. The groups to which the individual belongs, such as the family, the church, and particularly the state derive a part of their authority from the consent of the people. God has seen fit to

[1]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans. by A. T. Mackay, *et al.* (T. & T. Clark, 1961), III, 4, 117.

The diversity of gifts and functions of men necessitates the _____.

(community)

There can be no person without _____.

(other persons)

Man finds fulfilment in _____ *with other* _____.

(communication, persons)

Is the following statement true or false?

Man is entirely dependent on the community. _____

(false)

Both the individual and the community have _____ *and* _____.

(rights, responsibilities)

The rights of both the community and the individual have _____.

mediate a portion of His authority over the community through the people whom the community serves. Furthermore, God has reserved for Himself the final word with the individual, whether as a member of a family, a church, or a citizen of the state. It is the fact that man is directly responsible to God that gives him an independence that transcends any and all communities. As one who maintains human relations, he may be under the authority of the state but as a person before God, it is the authority of God that is final in his life. The word of man and particularly the Christian is, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29) whether as individual men or as a community of men.

The primary consideration of the Christian in his relation to the church or the Christian community is not the church's authority over him but his voluntary commitment to the church and its fellowship. When one is brought into union with Christ he comes into the family of God. This means, among other things, that he not only commits himself to God but also to the family of God and to the members of that family. The Christian community or family is, or is supposed to be, a closely knit fellowship, characterized by a mutual love of the members for one another. This love should be so closely akin to divine love or *agape* that the members of the family would share with one another in times of need. This is the abiding lesson from the experience of the Jerusalem church as recorded in Acts. The individuals in the fellowship who had possessions sold them and brought the proceeds to the Apostles that distribution might be made to those in need.

Responsibility and Freedom

Man not only has some resposibilities to and within the Christian community; he also has some responsibilities to other human communities. The more mature he is morally and spiritually, the more conscious he will be of the rights of others and of his own responsibilities. What happened to man's sense of responsibility when he sinned and the image of God was marred, defaced, or deformed? There is still enough of the image left to make man responsible and to leave him with a sense of responsibility. He is responsible because he is still free, although admittedly his freedom is limited. He is free enough, however, to be morally responsible.

The preceding does not mean that man is exempt from the operation of the laws of heredity or the influence of environmental factors that touch his life. His home, his church, his community determine to a considerable degree what he considers to be wise or unwise, good or bad, right or wrong. But at the time of decision his will is not forced. In the final analysis what he does is determined from within. Regardless of the factors that have touched and influenced his life, man is responsible at least for the way he responds to those factors.

God who created man a person respects the freedom He gave to man, but He also holds man accountable for what he does with his freedom. Freedom is not primarily a right but a duty of man before God. Also, man's freedom evolves from his relation to God. This means that when man asserts his independence of God, he loses his real freedom. He uses his freedom to lose his freedom and to become a slave of sin. In other words, man's

(limitations)

The Christian commits himself both to the family of God and to the _____ of that _____.

(members, family)

Is the following statement true or false?

Moral and spiritual maturity have little effect on a Christian's consciousness of others and of his own responsibilities. _____

(false)

Man is accountable for how he uses his _____.

truest and fullest freedom is found in relationship with and in obedience to God. It is an illusion for man to believe that he can be free apart from God. Rather, we are free in God and within His will. If the Son make us free, we are free indeed (John 8:36).

The latter freedom is a freedom from the condemnation of the Law but also a freedom from the enslavement of sin. This freedom belongs only to the redeemed child of God, and regretfully we must admit only potentially and progressively to him. In reality he remains enslaved to sin, but in his union with Christ there begins in his life a movement away from sin and hence an increasing freedom from the enslavement of sin. One reason for the movement away from sin is a keener sensitivity to sin and a deeper sense of responsibility for sin. Furthermore, the maturing child of God recognizes that just as his redemption is of grace so his increasing freedom from the enslavement of sin is also a work of grace. The consciousness that all is of grace places the Christian under an abiding obligation to live a life worthy of that grace. Here is the soundest possible basis for everyday Christian living. Grace and goodness belong together. Ours is a "therefore" morality or ethic.

(freedom)

What two things cause a Christian to move away from sin?

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What distinguishes man from the remainder of God's creation? _____

2. According to the author, what remains in man even though he is not perfectly unified and his wholeness is still a potential rather than a reality? _____

3. According to Paul, and from a Christian perspective in general, what is wrong with the total person? _____

4. According to the author, how is a person saved? _____

5. What is meant when we say that man was created in the image of God? _____

6. Since God has set man in the world in His image and as His representative, what is man? _____

7. What two separations came about in man because of sin?
   (1) _____
   (2) _____

8. List three relations that are made right when man through union with Christ has a restoration of the image of God.

9. Why is the restoration of the image of God in man never complete?

10. What gives man infinite value?

11. Since God will not force man's will to restore the marred or deformed image of God in man, how is the image restored?

12. List five factors that contribute to the diversity of human beings.

13. Name two places where the equality principle should be applied.

14. What necessitates the community?

15. What is the basis for communities of all types?

16. Describe the Christian's commitment to the Christian community.

17. How does man find his truest and fullest freedom?

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). The following activities are based on the study guide text.

1. Explain the biblical view of man's wholeness.
2. What has happened to the image of God within man?
3. Write a paragraph that shows the New Testament teaching on the equality of man.
4. Why does the author say that man is dependent on the community but he is also independent of the community?
5. Explain the freedom of man in light of man being in the image of God.

Advanced activity (Level 3). The following activities are based on the study guide text.

1. Read the author's discussion of "wholeness." Then read Matthew 23:36-38. Is this a conflict? How would you reconcile the two? (Be prepared to share your work with the seminar group.)
2. Discuss the total depravity of man. Define it and show how it affects man's life and salvation.
3. Write a paper of at least one page on the subject: "Man: God's Representative." Use Scripture references to support your work. (Be prepared to share your work with the group.)
5. Write your answer to this question: Since my heredity and my environment have an influence on me, am I responsible for the way I behave? Use Scripture references to support your answer.

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss the importance of ministering to "the whole man."
2. Discuss the privileges and responsibilities that come to man from "the image of God" in him.
3. Consider this statement by the author: "Man finds his greatest freedom and his most complete fulfilment as he voluntarily gives himself in service to God and man." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why, or why not?
4. Why is communion with others important to man?
5. Discuss the limitations of the rights of the group or community.
6. Discuss the preparation of a sermon or Bible lesson on "Responsibility and Freedom."