

# The Fallen Nature of Mankind

(Reading C.S. Lewis' fiction provided me with some insights about mankind's relationship to other creations of God that I used as a starting point for this essay.)

Creation is often divided into three common categories called animal, vegetable, and mineral. In addition, there are creatures that are spirits. Compared with the other categories, we don't have a lot of information about them, but there is some information given to us in the Bible.

As regards the physical universe, the category of mineral has been given the least freedom and power. Rocks cannot move about. They do not seem to make any sort of choice. However, even rocks have the ability to respond to God and his power. Jesus said the rocks would cry out to praise him if people didn't. Moving up the scale, we come to plants. Plants have limited freedom. They cannot move about freely, but they do have some power to choose the direction they will grow. Next is animals. Most animals have some power to move about and make choices. Some animals are more intelligent than others. Some seem to be able to choose their living conditions differently than others of the same species. The Bible states that both plants and animals responded to the power of God in situations from the Bible and acted differently than they normally would have.

Man has been given the most freedom of all the afore-mentioned creations. He is free to move about and make all sorts of choices. His most important choice was whether he will obey God or not. Now it is whether he will trust in God's forgiveness offered in Christ or not. But man's freedom is limited, also. He must provide for his food and water on a daily basis, protect himself from the elements, and have air to breath. He is not free to fly unaided, although he has the mind to create devices to help him accomplish that. He is bound by physical obstructions and cannot walk through walls.

The Bible speaks of the spirit of man. It appears that angels are either pure spirits, or at least have a larger component of spirit than man does. A spirit has fewer restrictions as regards the physical universe. Since a spirit does not have a physical body, he should not have to provide physical food, water, or air for a physical body daily. Physical walls probably do not provide a barrier to a spirit.

If we were to place these creations in an order of freedom, it would probably look like this:

minerals   plants   animals   man   spirits

Since man seems to be located between the animals and the spirits, an analysis can be made to see to which of these man is more closely related. One tool for this analysis is recognition. If an animal comes into a room with a man, the man will recognize the animal, assuming it is large enough to get his attention. The same is not true of a spirit. A man will have difficulty recognizing a spirit, though he may have a vague sense of it. Another indicator might be the amount of time spent caring for our physical bodies. Man

seems to spend a large amount of time gathering money, preparing meals, and taking care of the physical dwelling he lives in. This is very similar to animals. It would appear that by proportion, man is more like the animals.

However, the spirit component is certainly not missing completely. Peoples and cultures around the world all have a sense of God or of a higher being. The spiritual element of man is at the center of his being and has great influence over the direction his life will take in the long run.

Many of the forces affecting the physical universe resemble magnetic attraction, especially at the atomic level. If two atoms that will react with one another are brought close enough together, they will react. This is the process that allows our minds to chemically function. Many scientists believe this is how the entire universe functions, and any appearance of true freedom is really an illusion. However, it would seem that when the Bible places the responsibility for man's actions and sin on man himself, that God must have created him with the ability to rise above dependence upon only chemical reactions for his thoughts and choices. Even though two atoms that would react are brought into contact, the power of the spirit can stop the reaction and produce a different thought than would have physically occurred.

This might be true even to a very slight extent for the animal, vegetable and mineral groups referred to previously, but that is not exactly clear, since they are not held morally accountable to God.

The physical nature of man largely determines his experience of time. The physical universe has a great deal of consistency in regard to the rates of basic physical elements such as atoms. Since our brains are made of atoms, a certain number of chemical reactions must occur during a given day. The rest of our body also follows this pattern. A certain range of number of heartbeats, breaths, digestive contractions, etc must occur within a certain day before the next one can be experienced. If you ask a man to close his eyes and indicate when he thinks one minute has gone by, in many cases he will get close to the correct elapsed time. This is probably the result of an inner sense of the physical processes going on in his body.

If spirits don't have physical bodies, they are not bound by this restriction. Basically, their sense of time comes only from the events that occur. They don't have to wait for a certain number of physical actions to occur as a gauge of time. When men are bored, time seems to go slow, and when they are enjoying an event, it seems to go fast. This is probably an indication of what time seems like to spirits.

This combination of physical and spiritual components affects the rate of change possible in man. Because man has such a large proportion of physical makeup, change comes more slowly to him. His brain in the pattern of producing certain thoughts that come from certain physical reactions. These become habits. If he has consistently thought of murder as being morally wrong in the past, this pattern will not usually be suddenly be changed. Generally, man will not suddenly start planning to commit a great moral evil

one morning when all the days before he sincerely felt that the action was wrong. He may suddenly commit such an act out of rage on the spur of the moment, but that is not the same pattern.

The converse is also true. A man that is repeating evil actions will not usually change overnight into someone who plans and carries out only good actions. In both cases, change may be possible, but it will need to occur slowly. Each usual habit of thought will need to be unwound and replaced with a different pattern of thinking. So our physical nature slows our spiritual nature down. Changes from either good to evil or evil to good will take some time. Spirits possibly can change much more quickly than we can. They are not held back by any physical nature. Possibly this could explain why the fall left them with no mention in the Bible of a chance for redemption. With out a physical nature, they changed from good to evil very rapidly. Even men can reach the place where the Bible says they are beyond hope of redemption by continually resisting the Holy Spirit. Possibly, this happens even more quickly with spirits.

We see the interaction between the spiritual and physical natures as a person develops. When he is an infant, he is almost completely dependent upon the physical world for his existence and survival. As he grows, he becomes less and less dependent upon others to feed and care for him and is able to make more choices for himself. The spirit starts to take more control over the direction of his life.

Along the same lines, a rich man is freer from the limiting factors of the physical world than a poor man. A rich man would not need to spend as much time working, so he could devote more time either to Godly work, or to evil work. Maybe this is why the Bible has warnings about the dangers of riches. It moves us more in the direction of the spiritual, either good or evil.

Since God is pure spirit and has no limits, it is easy to wonder why he doesn't just override the physical limits to solve every problem here. One reason is that he created us to be physical/spiritual beings. He has not changed His mind about that decision. The process of sanctification will be worked out in a physical and spiritual fashion. The process will be largely physical by volume, but with the spiritual making the key decisions.

Many people feel that when a difficulty or tragedy arises and a spiritual or miraculous intervention is not forthcoming from God, it must be due only to sin. However, this is to denigrate the physical nature God created us with and not allow His physical processes to proceed. At times, God will override these processes with a miracle, but that is usually not the case. Christians suffer and die like everyone else in the physical world. God is pleased to work out his plan of spreading salvation in this world without changing the original plan of creation that gave man both a physical and spiritual nature.

With the fall in the garden of Eden, the inner condition of man's spirit and its relationship to the physical body changed. Man was left in these conditions: empty, selfish, proud,

bored, ashamed, and unable to control, direct and balance his physical nature.

The nature of the physical world also changed. God could not dwell with sin. Because man was both spirit and physical, God's relationship to the physical world changed also. Competition between creatures, sometimes even to the death, ensued. This same competition is found also in man in varying degrees. When man sinks to the same level found in fallen nature, it is tragic, but man seems to be capable of sinking even lower.

A.W. Tozer clearly pointed out the tragedy of following the natural competitive views and standards that the world accepts. He stated that the fierce competition for status and acceptance leaves the people of this world exhausted. Jesus offers us rest from this competition.

### **#Emptiness #**

The emptiness of man could be explained by a loss of the special breath of life that God breathed into him in creation. This breath was special because none of the animals were recorded as receiving it. Without it, man is missing the wonder and awe that can only come from perfect fellowship with God.

Springing from this emptiness is boredom. The pain of boredom is real and it is wrenching. Man tries many different methods to fill up this emptiness and deal with the boredom of life without God. Alcohol, drugs, gambling, sensuous indulgences and other vices come to mind. But even other healthy activities are abused in an attempt fill the vacuum. Entertainment, work, children, and otherwise good activities can become a way to try to fill the void that only God can fill. Since our current sinful nature will not allow us to fully experience God's presence, this pain of emptiness will always be present.

The fascination with entertainment that is presented with a volume that is so loud that it is even harmful to the body is an attempt to try to relieve this boredom. Other examples include the taking of great risks, the fascination with entertainment that is so full of horror, brutality, and terror that it can relieve this boredom with life temporarily.

In addition since, apart from God, all activities lose their significance and interest, there are very few pleasures that can satisfy for any length of time. Since sexual pleasure is a real pleasure and not one just derived from competition, it is used by some as a relief from this boredom. But even this real pleasure cannot fill the void. Therefore, many resort to more sexual partners and more bizarre sexual encounters to try to find something that will provide interest.

### **#Pride #**

The pride that is found in man is probably most directly related to the fall of his spiritual nature. The fall of Satan and his angels reflects the fall of our spirit. Satan's fall was because of his pride. He didn't want to answer to anyone but himself. We see the same hatred of God and rejection of His authority among people since the fall. Even Christians

have difficulty submitting to the authorities that God has put in place to govern society. It is strange, but Christians contain both a new nature that wants to love God and an old nature that hates Him and rebels against his authority.

Closely related to self-pride is self-hatred. Even though they seem to be opposites, actually they are closely related. The hatred springs from a sense of failure to measure up to the high standards created by man's pride.

### **#Shame #**

Adam and Eve's first reaction to their sin was shame. They tried to cover their bodies. This attempt to cover up our weakness and sin springs from both our physical nature and spiritual nature. The physical world was thrown into a competition, even to the death, if necessary. With the fall came a separation from God that left us alone. This sense of failure to live up to God's standards left us very uneasy in this competitive environment. The pride that entered the spirit does not want to admit its own failure or show this failure to others.

Man has developed many different methods to hide his moral and Godless spiritual bankruptcy. This cover up first affects the body. Man pretends to be something other than what he really is not only through the cover of clothing, but in all other surroundings. This can include everything from makeup to cars, houses, and every other external object that can cover him and distract attention from his bankrupt self. On a psychological level, silence can be frightening. Almost every beginning public speaker has to learn to not fill up gaps in the spoken message with noises and other sounds, such as "and", "ah", and others to try to distract the audience from focusing on him and his deficiencies instead of his spoken words.

One of the most painful embarrassments for many is the appearance that they have not measured up to an expectation. So, an attempt is made to lower expectations before the event occurs. An example is someone going up to bat in softball who announces, "now watch me strike out", hoping that the lowered expectations will protect him from the embarrassment that may occur if he fails to do well.

### **#Uncontrolled Physical nature #**

The physical nature was meant to be controlled and balanced by the spiritual nature. Since the fall, the spirit alone does not have the power from God needed to effectively control the physical nature. The ability to wait is diminished. Long-term needs are subverted by the desire to immediately fulfill a short-term desire. People have great difficulty waiting to experience sex until marriage, because the need for immediate pleasure overwhelms the desire to establish a lasting honorable relationship.

In comparing short term desires for pleasure with the long range desire for honesty, faithfulness, and good will, the desire for short term pleasures often overwhelm the long range desires for these attributes and they are lost.

## **#Selfishness #**

The selfishness present in man is tempered by his physical nature. The animals instinctively care for their young. Some animals even develop an attachment for another animal which not its offspring and will not be the same when it dies or is removed. This same physical nature creates a buffer against the utter selfishness contained in man's spirit since the fall. It allows the real pleasures associated with interaction with others to still exist. However, as a person grows older, the selfishness can reach the point where the person cannot get along with most other people. Even if it doesn't reach this point, it exists to a considerable extent in every person.

Abraham Lincoln and another man were riding on a train and conversing. Lincoln made the statement that every action people do ultimately proceeds from selfishness. The other man disagreed. Lincoln looked out the window of the train and saw some pigs stuck in a mud hole. He immediately had the train stop, went out, and freed the pigs. When they were under way again, the other man asked how Lincoln could state that every human action proceeded from selfishness when he had just performed such a selfless act. Lincoln responded that if he hadn't done it, he would have felt guilty all day, so he did it for his own relief from this guilty feeling.

If our physical restraint is removed in the next life, man will quickly reach utter selfishness. He will become what his fallen spirit desires very quickly: a creature of complete selfishness, pride, emptiness, shame, and bitterness.

We easily minimize the extent to which God hates sin. We too easily think that God is satisfied with the lives we now lead as believers. We read about the terrible destruction God sent upon wickedness in the old testament, but believe that we can have a cozy relationship with Jesus, since he is different. But Jesus is God and it is He who sent this destruction. We need to realize it is only through His death and the substitution of his life for us that we can approach God.

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