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### **“What is the difference between the soul and spirit of man?”**

We must look to the second account of the creation of man as recorded in Genesis before we can begin to trace the origins which lie behind the question. In Genesis 2:7 we read, “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”.

Now let us analyse the above statement and see what we can learn. In the first place we read, “God formed man of the dust of the ground.” I think the only interpretation we can put on this is that the bone, sinews, and flesh of man were formed by God, and in this initial created state man was inanimate. Secondly, we read “(God) breathed into his nostrils the breath of life”. According to the Hebrew text a more correct rendering would be “the breath of lives” (plural number). Here we have a picture of inanimate man, formed of the flesh by God, having ‘lives’ breathed into him. Thirdly, we see the effect of this, “And man became a living soul”. So here we see inanimate man springing to life by the impartation of life from the life-giving Source, God.

#### **Body, Soul, and Spirit.**

In our reasoning we have reached the point where created man has been animated by the soul which God has imparted to him. There are those who say that the body of man is his soul, but surely they have failed to note the distinction made by Jesus, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the

soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul *and* body in hell (Matt. 10:28). So according to Jesus, the soul and the body are not one and the same.

It is also evident that the soul of man is *not* his spirit. In Hebrews we read, "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). Paul also made the composition of man very clear when he wrote to the saints at Thessalonica, "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). Furthermore, the writer to the Hebrews tells us that God is the Father of spirits, "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which have corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live" (Heb. 12:9). See also Numbers 16:22).

It is now quite clear that when God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of lives, He meant man to have a body, soul, and spirit. God wants all souls to be saved, because they are His. He wants all the spirits of men to be renewed because He is the Father of spirits; surely this is why Paul refers to the last Adam, Christ, as a 'quickening spirit' (1 Cor. 15:45).

We now know that every man has a soul and a spirit; we must try to discover the distinction between them.

### Spirit

If there is a distinction, and the question assumes that there is, then we must make a careful study of the passages in which the words are used. The word 'spirit' (Greek PNEUMA, Hebrew RUAH) we find is used for 'wind', hence John 3:8. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof". Again it is used for 'breath', hence, yielding up the breath, "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost" (Matt. 27:50).

Jesus Himself indicated the true nature of God when He declared, "God is Spirit". Angels are also designated as spirits, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister" (Heb. 1:14). The spirituality of God must have a reaction from the portion of man's nature which we are trying to establish, "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). The absolute personal application is found in the statement, "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him" (1 Cor. 2:11).

In Romans 2:29 we find the spirit tied with the heart, "And circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter". If response from the heart is said to be 'in the spirit' then this gives a new dimension to the word 'spirit'. It seems to suggest that the spiritual part of man is the Divine in man. The Christian is the recipient of the Holy Spirit. His responses to God are 'in the spirit'. It is the highest part of human nature, and when we have been quickened by the 'quickening spirit', Christ, the scriptures examined suggest to us that we are related to the angels, and to God Himself.

### Soul

The word 'soul' (Greek PSUCHE) denotes the breath, the breath of life, then the soul. It refers to the natural life of the body, hence, "And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life (Psuche) is in him" (Acts 20:10).

We do not read of God being referred to as 'the Holy Soul'. Paul teaches us also, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). This indicates to us that the 'natural man', the 'soulish' man, cannot respond to the higher spiritual nature because he is spiritually dead; he needs the 'quickenning spirit' before his spiritual discernment can be exercised. Paul also argues that 'to be carnally minded is death', i.e. that the form of life associated only with the flesh, the 'soul-life', cannot be associated with that spirit-orientated life which is the response of the believer to God.

The *regenerative* process needs a little explanation. A man who is dead in trespasses and sins needs a spiritual change to take place in him. Being dead in trespasses and sins does not preclude intellectual activity, otherwise such a person could not reasonably appreciate and respond to the Gospel. Such a death affects only the spirit, but because the person is said to be 'spiritually dead', we are not to conclude that the spirit in that person is non-existent. A tree is dead insofar that it has no communication with man, but it has weight, it occupies space, it exists. A spirit is dead when it is not the recipient of, nor is the instrument of expression of the Divine Spirit; it lie dormant, ready to be regenerated by 'the quickening spirit'. When it is quickened, it becomes again, as Peter explains it, "a partaker of the Divine Nature" (2 Pet. 1:4).

### Conclusion

Man, then, is body, soul, and spirit. The body is the flesh which is animated by the soul and the spirit. The soul and spirit are closely connected but are distinct. The spirit of man may be looked upon as the highest part of the human nature, especially when associated with the heart. Justin Martyr in his treatise on the Resurrection says, "The body is the dwelling of the soul, the soul the dwelling of the spirit". W.E.Vine comments, "The spirit may be recognised as the life principle bestowed on man by God, the soul as the resulting life constituted in the individual, the body being the material organism animated by soul and spirit". That, I think, is about as near as we can get.