

Intercontinental Church of God

6. Mankind

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

The greatest truth of the Bible is that God is reproducing Himself through mankind. Hence, humanity's goal and purpose for existence is, ultimately, to enter God's family and to become literal sons of God. Human beings are physical beings with no inherent immortality, but they can receive eternal life as a free gift from God. Man was created by God to be wholly flesh and blood, yet in God's image and with a spiritual component added to his brain to create the human mind.

DOCTRINAL OVERVIEW

To understand that God is reproducing Himself through mankind is absolutely essential for understanding the nature of man. The fact that human beings were made with the potential and the destiny of entering God's family as His literal children and thereby actually sharing His God-level plane of existence is fundamental to our knowledge of who and what we are.

Man was created as a physical being, a "living soul" (Gen. 2:7). The English word "soul" is translated from the Hebrew word *nephesh* and simply means a "living, breathing creature." The same word is used in reference to all "breath-bearing life" (which is a good working definition of *nephesh*—animal as well as human life. *Nephesh* refers to *animals* in Genesis 1:20, 21, 24; 2:19; 9:10; 12, 15 (where it is translated "creature") and also Genesis 1:30; 9:4; Leviticus 11:10; 17:11, etc. (Note a legitimate, literal translation of Genesis 1:20: "Let the waters swarm with a swarm of living souls."))

The Greek equivalent of *nephesh* is *psuche*, which also literally means "breath," animal as well as human (Rev. 8:9; 16:3). Thus, the biblical "soul" is just the physical life of man and beast—man and beast alike. Solomon makes the point clear: "For man's fate is a beast's fate, one fate befalls them both; as the one dies so the other dies, the same breath is in them all" (Eccles. 3:19, *Moffatt*).

Interestingly enough, *nephesh* is also used to represent "dead bodies"—"dead *nepheshes*" or "dead souls" (Lev. 21:11; Num. 6:6, 11, etc.). The biblical "soul" then can simply become the "body," and when it dies it dies all over. Thus man *is* a living soul which lives and dies as does any animal soul; therefore, man neither has nor is an "immortal soul."

Ezekiel twice states that "the soul that sinneth it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, 20). Jesus proclaimed that both the body *and the soul* can be destroyed in hell (Matt. 10:28). John agreed: "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (I Jn. 3:15), and Paul concurred: "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).

In Psalm 146:4 we read that when man's "breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day *his thoughts perish*." Solomon wrote that "*the dead know not anything*" (Eccles. 9:5). Clearly then, when a human being dies, he is indeed mentally as well as physically dead—wholly unconscious, unaware, unknowing. The example of David confirms this. Here was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), the eternal king of Israel (Ezek. 37:24); yet Peter stated that "David ... is both *dead and buried*, and ... is *not* ascended into the heavens"

(Acts 2:29, 34).

Although man and animals have identically mortal "souls," man has been created superior to animals in a number of important respects. First, God shows that man was made in His own "image" and "likeness" (Gen. 1:26—and therefore carries the general appearance of God, unlike the animals who are simply made "after their kind"). In addition, God has given "the spirit of man" to humans. This "spirit in man," a nonphysical component which God designed to combine with the human brain to form the human mind, is the primary factor which distinguishes man from animals, elevating man's mental capacity from the wholly physical to the spiritual. The spirit in man imparts godlike abilities and capacities. Man is thus able to experience a likeness to God in his mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions; however, man is presently limited to the physical dimension while God lives and moves in the spiritual dimension. Man is physical and mortal, but through the spirit in man has the potential of moving into the God-plane level of existence and of becoming spiritual and immortal.

The spirit in man, then, is that essence which imparts human mind power to physical brain tissue. It is the means by which man exercises his promised "dominion" over all other creatures (Gen. 1:26).

The spirit in man is not an "immortal soul"; it has absolutely no consciousness apart from the brain. Job speaks of such a spirit: "it is a spirit in man ... that giveth them understanding" (Job 32:8, *Jewish Pub. Soc.*). Paul asks, "What human being can understand the thoughts of a man except [by means of] the spirit of man which is in him" (I Cor. 2:11; *Moffatt; ccf. KGJ*). This simply states that self-consciousness—the awareness of thoughts, not just the thoughts themselves—is generated by the spirit in man. The spirit of man is not the man, but rather a spiritual essence which provides man with his utterly unique characteristics of self-awareness and mind, and thus lifts him far above the level of mere animal intelligence.

Zechariah shows that the Eternal God of Israel "formeth the spirit of man within him" (Zech. 12:1). No immortal soul here—the "spirit of man" and the "him" are separate entities, with the former located "within" the latter. Paul confirms that this "spirit of man" is "in him" (I Cor. 2:11). This does not say that man is a spirit, but rather that this "spirit" is located in the man. (If a man swallows a marble, that marble would be in him, but does that then make the man a marble? The man may have "lost his marbles," but he is surely not a marble himself.)

If we are not careful, we can very quickly begin to think that the spirit in man possesses conscious sensation, thought and awareness independent of the brain. This is wholly wrong. The spirit in man, of itself, cannot sense, cannot think, cannot reason, cannot know. The brain performs these tasks. But to engender the exquisite qualities which constitute the human mind, the spirit in man must be added.

We can liken the spirit in man to a blank recording tape and the human brain to a tape recorder—neither one able to generate the human mind without the other. The tape recorder houses all the machinery and wirings required for its particular operation, that of sound reproduction. Likewise, the human brain contains all the necessary structures and circuits for its manifold responsibilities—which are sensation, memory, emotion, creativity, etc. Just as the tape recorder produces nothing without the recording tape running through it, so the human brain is severely limited without the spirit in man joined to it. The recording tape imparts the capacity of auditory reproduction to the tape recorder; this same tape also records and stores the magnetic impress from the tape recorder. Analogously, the spirit in man imparts the capacity of creative intellect and self-conscious personality to the brain, while at the same time recording and storing the stamp impress from the brain.

At death, the spirit in man "tape" is complete—It contains, at that time, the incredibly detailed, indelible record of every nuance of life, thought, personality, attitude and character which made one exactly the singular individual he was. The "tape" can then be "filed"—until needed again for reactivation, an event called the "resurrection" in biblical terminology. Solomon alludes to this "filing" of the spirit in man as well as to the mortality of the man in Ecclesiastes 12:7: "Then (at death) shall the dust (the human being) return to the earth as it was: and the spirit (the spirit-in-man tape) shall return unto God who gave it."

Again, we can easily make the mistake of attributing consciousness to this filed-away "tape" which is no more the former living individual than a boxed piece of magnetic recording tape is the peaceful third movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. In order to reconstitute those serene musical vibrations from the magnetic recording tape, the tape must be reinserted into a tape recorder. Similarly, in order to reconstitute the specific person's conscious awareness from the "spirit-in-man tape," the spirit in man must be reinserted into a brain. Therefore, a reorganized brain and body (whether spiritual or physical) are necessary adjuncts to the spirit-in-man tape in order to reactivate-or resurrect-the original individual.

Man was created physical, mortal and limited so that God could work with and prepare him for his ultimate destiny. God's moral character is self-determined by His own free choice. If man is to be like Him and share eternity on His level, he must also be free to make his own decisions and thus to build his own character. Physical life provides the arena for man to learn the object lessons necessary to become like God in character. This kind of character can be developed only through time and experience.

Freedom of choice requires the possibility of rejecting God's character and way of life. If a man, given every conceivable opportunity over a protracted period of time, becomes set in the kind of moral character which would poison him and his environment, God in His infinite mercy and wisdom would not endow that man with His eternal life and unlimited potential.

The Bible states that when God created man, He "saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Man was thus not created with an evil nature. This is confirmed in Ecclesiastes 7:29: "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright." On the other hand, man was not created with the righteous, holy character of God, which it is impossible to create instantaneously. One might say man was created morally neutral so that he could develop moral character through experiencing life.

Although a free moral agent, with the full capacity to make his own decisions, man is subject to influences. As a part of the human learning and growing process, God has allowed Satan, the ultimate source of evil, to influence man for the period of human history. Much of what can be called the natural mind—the mind in opposition to God's mind—is a result of Satan's influence as well as man's own wrong choices as he lives and experiences life without God's guidance. It is important to understand that God did not create man with an intrinsically evil nature but rather with free choice, and subject to the influences of both good and evil.

All humans are born morally neutral, as was Adam when he was first created. Unfortunately, Adam chose to follow Satan the Devil and thus sinned, with the result that his frame and direction of mind became evil and perverted. Likewise, as we sin, our minds become perverted from their moral neutrality and become instead self-oriented, filled with vanity, jealousy, lust and greed—becoming oriented as Satan's mind is oriented, in opposition to the orientation of God's mind. The Bible states that "the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7), and that man's "heart is deceitful above all

things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9)-reflecting clearly in both scriptures what is the attitude of Satan.

How does this happen? How does man reflect Satan's nature? Ephesians 2:2 reveals some critical, indeed startling, information. Satan is called "the prince of the power of the air," projecting a form of "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." This seems to indicate that Satan the devil has the capacity to influence individual human beings by having his negative, evil "spirit" affect their neutral spirit in man, much as a radio broadcast will affect thousands of neutral radio receivers to "play its tune."

The only antidote to Satan's broadcast—the remedy required to change the heart of man—is God's Holy Spirit. It is impossible for man to obey God in the full spirit of the law without it. And this is precisely what God wants us to learn: that we desperately need God's Holy Spirit in order to have our minds and hearts converted, to have our whole direction of life changed to follow God's way.

The spirit in man is, of itself, incomplete. It indeed elevates man's mental capacity to the spiritual plane, but all this does is cause spiritual problems without any spiritual solutions. The existence of the spirit in man clearly demonstrates our burning need of the missing dimension of the Spirit of God. Thus the reality of the spirit in man becomes the focal point of all human life. And it is in the arena of human survival that the spirit in man takes on monumental significance because the mere existence of a spiritual component in the human mind unveils the fundamental cause underlying all mankind's troubles.

Consider what the spirit in man signifies; the human mind operates with a spiritual dimension, and that means spiritual problems. The spirit in man adds spiritual problems to the physical human brain. (The human mind and its resultant spiritual problems are as directly related together as are the animal brain and its resultant instinctive behavioral patterns. Thus, while the animal brain maintains perfect harmony in nature, the human mind is about to utterly destroy the earth!).

That is the crux of the matter—that is why mankind is planning its own extinction: human beings have *spiritual* problems but only *physical* solutions—and physical solutions just cannot solve spiritual problems. This is why the spirit in man *must* become the focal point of all human knowledge, because it enables us to understand—for the first time—that all man's physical difficulties are caused by deep-seated spiritual complications. No amount of physical measures—no matter how intricate or expensive—will ever improve the overall welfare and happiness of the human race. If we ever hope to solve our physical problems and have an abundantly happy world, *our spiritual* problems. must be solved first.

The spirit in man is the key to man. The knowledge of it suddenly reorients us. It points us in the proper direction. It tells us where we must look if we are ever to have a peaceful planet.

Spiritual solutions are needed to solve *spiritual* problems. If this one fundamental point were understood, man should be forced to realize that the structure of his entire society—from the government of nations to the behavior of children—needs radical revision before people can at last be joyfully busy with peace and progress.

This is where God's plan of salvation comes in. God first calls us by—opening our minds to His truth, leading us to recognize our wretched, sinful state, cut off from God. Then upon our heartfelt repentance and sincere acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Saviour, God enables us through baptism and the laying on of hands to receive

His Spirit. Conversion by God's Holy Spirit means a renewing of one's mind (Rom. 12:2), a complete changing of one's attitude and heart; it is the creation of a new man, walking in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Through God's Spirit man can have the fellowship and communion with God that is so important to growth in God's mind and character.

It is not fully revealed how God's Spirit actually works. We know that it alters our whole mental outlook and direction in life from evil to good, from satanic to godly—yet how does it do this? Romans 8:16 states that God's Holy Spirit "itself beareth witness with our spirit [in man] that we are the children of God." This begins to show that God's Holy Spirit functions by working through the spirit in man which is the intrinsic spiritual component of every human mind. If to this we add biblical analogies of conversion to begettal and of spiritual conception to physical conception, we arrive at the working model of God's Holy Spirit impregnating and energizing man's spirit much as a male sperm impregnates and energizes a female ovum. (There are many spiritually instructive understandings and extrapolations to be derived from this analogy.) Thus the spirit in man becomes the focal point of human existence; it is the one essential element differentiating us from animals; and it is, at the same time, both the vehicle through which Satan can influence us and our link with the divine, giving us the full potential for spiritual conception through God's Holy Spirit.

Although the negative or evil side of man must be dealt with, the Church of God chooses to focus on the positive and awesome potential of mankind. This is the heart and core of the message Jesus brought to man. Through God's grace and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ man can be forgiven of his wrong choices and sins. God in His infinite love and wisdom has provided a plan by which man can, as a free moral agent, gain the experience and character necessary to receive eternal life. If the spiritual essence God gives us at baptism continues to grow within us, we will personally be born into God's family at the resurrection. Conversely, God shall destroy, in the lake of fire any who absolutely refuse to repent and obey Him, that is, those who have been spiritually aborted. From this we draw the conclusion that there is no "second chance" for those who totally reject God and His way after having been enlightened, their end is to be burned (Heb. 6:8). But not having a "second chance" presupposes that every person must really have a full first chance for salvation. This means that God can only condemn unrepentant, deliberate sinners "who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:4-5). To have a real opportunity for salvation, to be judged by God, human beings must *really* know the truth (Heb. 10:26).

Since it is God's will and purpose for all men to reach their full potential as sons of God, all men shall have a full opportunity to actualize that potential. Thus mankind will become God (as its family name), and God's family will grow into the multiple billions. The lengthy history of man's mostly negative experience is only one phase of God's plan, not the final chapter.

The ultimate destiny of man is truly beyond our limited comprehension now, although God does give us certain hints. God's purpose is to put "all things"—everything—including the whole universe, under man (Heb. 2:8). Not only are human beings promised eternal life but also the sharing of all that it means to be in the family of God. God's greatest desire is to share everything with us. His only concern is that His sons be prepared in character, attitude and experience for that fabulous destiny.

Thus we see that God did not conclude His spiritual creation in the first seven days recorded in Genesis 1 and 2. Rather, those chapters record the physical creation of man. God is now working with man spiritually and creating His own character in man so that in time he might be born into God's Kingdom to share God's greatness as a veritable son of God for eternity. Earth is thus the proving ground where we physical human

beings can gain the character necessary to rule with God for all time.

Although the ultimate purpose of human life is to be fulfilled at the resurrection, God does not neglect the present physical life. Indeed the fulfillment, abundance, happiness and success of this human life are an integral part of God's plan. The entirety of the book of Proverbs is filled with instructions and exhortations explaining how men, women and children should act in order to achieve the maximum success in their lives. God truly wants all mankind to prosper, with everyone achieving his or her own fullest individual potential in all areas of living: social, economic, intellectual, family and personal. Jesus Christ stated that "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (Jn. 10:10). And the apostle John gives it the proper perspective: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health" (III Jn. 2). In line with God's most magnificent truth of man's destiny, the Church of God upholds and seeks to promote the dignity of man in every facet of human life.

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This publication is intended to be used as a personal study tool. Please know it is not wise to take any man's word for anything, so prove all things for yourself from the pages of your own Bible.

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