

“Dichotomy versus Trichotomy”  
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An Excursus to *Spirit, Soul, Body: The Blueprint of Man in the Image of God*  
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## DICHOTOMY VERSUS TRICHOTOMY

For the first three centuries of the Church, the leaders' writings show belief in three-part Man, but then dichotomy became the predominate view through the psychology of Augustine.<sup>1</sup> Dichotomists believe Man is two-part: one physical (body) and one immaterial (soul/spirit). They believe Scripture uses *soul* and *spirit* synonymously for the same one part. They assert the different words exist because of the artistic license of authors who also use words such as *heart* and *mind* to describe the invisible part of us. Many, if not most or all, of the historical and modern dichotomists are sincere disciples, who love God and deserve respect. However, it is possible to be sincerely wrong, and we believe this error has contributed greatly to the soulishness of believers (as Paul called it, literally, in 1 Cor. 2:14-3:4, treated on page 9).

I will take great pains to present their arguments accurately, though abbreviating them is an unfair necessity. For the sake of educating without overwhelming, I have chosen to omit certain verses or considerations. If you are curious about some silence, please contact us through ProjectOne28.com.

### DICHOTOMISTS SEE INTERCHANGEABLE TERMS

The main reason dichotomists believe in two-part nature is they consider Scripture to use *soul* and *spirit* interchangeably.

A. Renowned Reformed theologian Louis Berkhof led with the parallelism in Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1:46-47,<sup>2</sup> which was popular style in the poetic Hebrew culture of Bible times: "And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior.'" Dichotomists claim this parallelism repeats the same idea with synonyms; both the spirit and the soul worship God because they are the same immaterial part. (They rightly stress that her body also worshiped, as evidenced by the vocal expression, because Man is whole.)<sup>3</sup>

B. Wayne Grudem, a respected contemporary theologian in the vein of Berkhof, leads with Scripture reporting Jesus' soul was troubled (Jn. 12:27) and His spirit was troubled (13:21) by His impending crucifixion.<sup>4</sup>

C. Scripture sometimes speaks of the combination of body and soul as the whole of Man (e.g. Mt. 6:25, 10:28), whereas it also considers the body and spirit as the whole (e.g. Eccl. 12:7, 1 Cor. 5:3-5).<sup>5</sup>

D. Berkhof wrote, "Death is sometimes described as the giving up of the soul, Gen. 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21; Acts 15:26; and then again as the giving up of the spirit, Ps. 31:5; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59. Moreover both 'soul' and 'spirit' are used to designate the immaterial element of the

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<sup>1</sup> Early trichotomist leaders included Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus of Alexandria, and Basil of Caesarea. For example, Justin Martyr wrote, "As the body is the house of the soul, so the soul is the house of the spirit." But in the Fourth Century, a bishop of Laodicea, Apollinaris, though affirming the Nicene Creed's orthodoxy of Christ's Godhood and Manhood, blundered in his attempt to explain the humanity of Christ. He confused the distinctions of spirit and mind and asserted it was replaced in the Man Jesus by the *Logos* ("Word," in Jn. 1:1, 14). His view was condemned at the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381 A.D., and trichotomy began to be avoided. Well-cited in John B. Woodward, Jr., *Man as Spirit, Soul, Body: A Study in Biblical Psychology* (Pigeon Forge, TN: Grace Fellowship International, 2006) 73-75, quoting Heard, Berkhof, and others. Available at [gracenotebook.com](http://gracenotebook.com).

<sup>2</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology: New Combined Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1996) 194.

<sup>3</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994, 2000) 477.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 473-474.

<sup>5</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 194.

dead, 1 Pet. 3:19; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 6:9; 20:4.”<sup>6</sup>

E. Grudem (who I find very good at arguing from silence) points out that Scripture never says both *soul* and *spirit* leave the body at its death.<sup>7</sup>

F. Berkhof sees two parts described in Genesis 2:7. The dust is obviously the body, and the breath of life is the spirit (which trichotomists also believe). Instead of counting the “living soul” a third part, Berkhof sees it as synonymous with the “breath or spirit of life.” He even says, “Thus it may be said that man *has* spirit, but *is* soul” (emphasis his).<sup>8</sup>

G. Berkhof also argued from experience: “While man is conscious of the fact that he consists of a material and a spiritual element, no one is conscious of possessing a soul in distinction from a spirit.”<sup>9</sup>

H. Grudem claims both the soul and the spirit sin, citing 2 Corinthians 7:1 and a horde of Old Testament verses.<sup>10</sup> This seems particularly rewarding to dichotomists, because many trichotomists believe the spirit (of a believer) is a purer element, untainted by sin.

I. Grudem lastly argues the spirit does the same things as the soul, and the soul does the same things as the spirit, because they are one, synonymous. Both feel; both think; both worship.<sup>11</sup>

### THREE-PART RESPONSES

Dichotomists should be able to admit that none of those verses explicitly state that the soul is the same as the spirit, nor that Man is two and only two parts. They may infer it. Perhaps it is a correct inference, but let us admit that it is not explicit and then consider the next three overarching points (followed by specific responses).

First, an overlap in usage of terms does not necessarily negate distinction. Dichotomists negate the distinction between soul and spirit because of apparent overlaps in language. But they themselves do *not* negate the difference between body and soul, even though there is overlap there, too.<sup>12</sup> The word for “soul” is often used (alone, without “body”) for the whole person as an individual (e.g. Lev. 2:1, 7:20, 27:22; Jer. 52:28). Yet dichotomists still believe such usage of soul implies relationship with a body. Similarly, Scripture also uses *nephesh* (soul) to refer to a dead body without life or the departed soul (and spirit). Yet dichotomists do not therefore say the soul is the same as the body. Trichotomists are using the same kind of sensibility to still see the spirit as a distinct third part, even when not listed explicitly (as it is in places such as 1 Thess. 5:23 and Heb. 4:12, addressed below). Literature is not simple math.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, less detail does not necessarily contradict more detail. To say that a Man has a body

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<sup>6</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 194.

<sup>7</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 474.

<sup>8</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 194.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>10</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 475-476.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 476-477.

<sup>12</sup> Well argued by Woodward, *op. cit.*, 94.

<sup>13</sup> Especially not literature breathed by a transcendent, mysterious God through more than forty human writers spanning over 1,500 years in diverse geographies, languages, and cultures. Yet spiritual believers can discern spiritual truths by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:13).

and a soul does not contradict having a body and a soul and a spirit. Woodward deftly draws correlation with other facets of Scripture: was there one angel at the tomb (Mt. 28:2) or two (Lk. 24:4)? Was there one demoniac in Gadara (Mk. 5:2) or two (Mt. 8:28)? Was there one blind man outside Jericho (Mk. 10:46) or two (Mt. 20:30)?<sup>14</sup> Because we believe God-breathed words cannot contradict themselves, we believe both are true; there were two. If there is two, then it is also true there is one, because one is included in two. Suppose there are three and only three cars in a parking lot. One is a Ford; another is a Toyota; another, a Chevy. One author could correctly write, "There are three cars in the parking lot." Another author could write less specifically, but still correctly, "There is a Ford and a Toyota in the parking lot." Still another author would be equally correct to write, "There is one Ford in the parking lot." Yes, I am one person. Yes, I have a body and soul. Yes, I have body and spirit. Yes, I have a body and a soul and a spirit. Less detail does not necessarily contradict more detail.

Thirdly, importantly, soul and spirit may seem interchangeable at first blush, and in some contexts that may be true. *But a closer examination reveals soul and spirit are not entirely interchangeable.* Soul is used alone as the personhood or individuality of a living Man, but spirit is not used in that manner.<sup>15</sup> The spirit is not hated or persecuted as the soul can be.<sup>16</sup> The New Testament always uses *pneuma* (spirit) to contrast the physical or metaphorical *sarx* (flesh), but *psuchē* (soul) never contrasts *sarx*.<sup>17</sup> God is called the "Father of spirits" (Heb. 12:9, cf. Zech. 12:1), but never the Father of souls. The adjectival form of soul (*psuchikos*, soulish) is consistently negative and contrasted against the always "positive and Godward"<sup>18</sup> adjective for spirit (*pneumatikos*, spiritual). This contrast between soulish and spiritual is extremely vital in its theological precision and practical application (expounded below). And perhaps most convincingly, the Holy Spirit works in and through the human spirit with an intimate connection that is not said of the soul. Scripturally, spirit and soul are not interchangeable. Spirit and soul are not synonyms.

Now for specific responses to the dichotomist views outlined above:

A. Parallelism does not water down into simple redundancy. Mary, by the Spirit, still chose different nouns, verbs, and direct objects to more fully describe the nuances of her worship. Many translations do not maintain the change in tenses from Luke 1:46 to 1:47. Truly, the soul's action is present tense, while the spirit's is aorist (Greek past tense). The soul *magnifies*, whereas the spirit *rejoiced*. It places the spirit's action logically before the soul's. The spirit rejoiced; then the soul magnified. We do not suggest that the soul cannot participate in worship; the Scriptural point is an issue of source and order. Worship must begin in the spirit, for God is spirit (Jn. 4:24). Then the spirit communicates truth to the soul, and the soul magnifies it and expresses it through the body. It is ironic that Reformed dichotomists use this passage for proof, since this is where the great light<sup>19</sup> of the Reformation, Martin Luther, expounded on the three-part Image in his commentary (more on page X).

I. This leads to Grudem's point about the spirit and soul doing the same things because they are the same. The soul/spirit thinks, feels, and worships. We affirm an amazingly mysterious

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<sup>14</sup> Woodward, *op. cit.*, 99.

<sup>15</sup> Gustav F. Oehler, *Theology of the Old Testament* (NY: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883), 150. Cited in Woodward, 97.

<sup>16</sup> Eduard Schweizer, "Psuche," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964) 6:649, 654-655. Cited in Woodward, 97.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Woodward, 100.

<sup>19</sup> Unbelievably, Berkhof states that only "a few lesser lights [of the Reformation] defended the trichotomic theory" (*op. cit.*, 192). Luther is not a lesser light of the Reformation! His wonderful trichotomy is quoted on page 5.

interconnectedness of spirit, soul, and body. For example, how can we explain the difference and interaction between the body's brain and the soul's mind? The soul uses the body's brain to think. Emotions are also connected to the brain's control of the endocrine system and the release of hormones and endorphins. It is just as sensible to expect a similar interaction between the spirit and the soul. The spirit can transmit a thought to the soul, which the soul can receive or reject (e.g. Mk. 2:8, 1 Cor. 12:8). The spirit can transmit an emotion to the soul, and the soul can adopt it as its own.<sup>20</sup> When Grudem adds the point about the participation of the body in thinking, feeling, and worship,<sup>21</sup> he cuts the leg out from under his argument. Even though body and soul do the same things, they are not the same parts – neither are soul and spirit.

B. Jesus' troubled soul and troubled spirit also fail to explicitly prove the sameness of soul and spirit. It still fits within the framework of trichotomy. (The response to Point I, above, applies here, too.) It is true that Jesus' soul and spirit were both troubled by the same impending event: crucifixion. However, the contexts of the reports do differ. It makes sense that John would choose in 12:27 to emphasize the trouble of Jesus' soul, because the will resides in the soul. This passage describes Jesus' *willingness* to lay down His soul-life (*psuchē*), dying in order to bear fruit for the glory of God and for the Creation of the Church (12:23-28). Later, after the Passover meal and washing the disciples' feet, Jesus was troubled in spirit and spoke of betrayal by one of His friends (13:21). The *spiritual* warfare was intensifying: Satan had already put it in Judas' heart to betray Him (13:2), and then Satan entered Judas during Jesus' interaction (13:27). Still later, His body was also troubled – to the point of sweating blood (Lk. 22:44). Section Four of the booklet and another excursus<sup>22</sup> honor Jesus in thankfulness by describing how all three parts of His Manhood endured the full punishment for our sins on the Cross.

C. It is true that Scripture sometimes describes only two parts in order to represent the whole.<sup>23</sup> But Scripture also occasionally uses only one part to represent the whole, and Man remains more than one part (e.g. Lev. 2:1, 7:20, 27:22; Jer. 52:28). Furthermore, 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is the only verse explicitly defining the "completely" "whole" Man: spirit and soul and body (more on page 6). Man's "one" immaterial part consists of two parts just as the tabernacle's one closed-off section (Holy Place) hid an additional innermost room (Holy of Holies, more on page 5). Therefore, each inner element can represent the inner man as a whole (with two parts). Again, less detail does not contradict more detail. Speaking of two parts does not prohibit a third – just as speaking of the soul alone does not prohibit a body (or a spirit).

D. True: death is described as giving up the soul or the spirit from the body, and the dead are called souls or spirits.<sup>24</sup> The response to Point C applies here. It also makes sense in many passages why the author, by the Spirit, chose to emphasize one of the two invisible parts. For example, the New Testament verses of the dead as "souls" are in the context of martyrdom (Rev. 6:9, 20:4). The will resides in the soul, and so calling them "souls" honors their *willing* sacrifice. On the other hand, "spirits in prison" flows naturally from the contextual setup that Jesus was made alive in the spirit (or Spirit) in which He preached to them (1 Pet. 3:18-19).

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<sup>20</sup> See the Scriptural description of the spirit's feelings on pages 4-5 of the *Spirit, Soul, Body* booklet.

<sup>21</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 477.

<sup>22</sup> See [ProjectOne28.com/cross](http://ProjectOne28.com/cross) for this author's "The Fullness of Judgment Upon the Man Christ Jesus."

<sup>23</sup> However, Berkhof lists 1 Cor. 5:3, 5, which I do not believe contextually represents the whole of Man.

<sup>24</sup> Except that Acts 15:26, referenced by Berkhof, does not apply to souls departing from bodies. Barnabas and Paul were still alive, being sent to Antioch. The expression commended them for giving up their soul-lives for the sake of the Gospel. They considered their soul-lives nothing and traded them for lives of surrender to the Spirit of Christ.

E. It is smart of Grudem to notice Scripture does not speak of both the soul and spirit departing the dead body simultaneously. I wish it did, but it does not have to. The silence does not overturn the affirmative three-part passages.

F. Trichotomists would simply say Berkhof is wrong about their experience. There is something beyond reason, beyond feelings, in the realm of faith that bubbles up to affect reason and feelings. An interesting application (from left field): Scripture describes the spirit praying, using the body's tongue, but the mind being unfruitful (1 Cor. 14:14). With the gift of tongues, the spirit<sup>25</sup> bypasses the soul in order to employ the body.<sup>26</sup>

G. Page 8 (affirmative point G) shows Berkhof is simply mistaken about Genesis 2:7, which indeed teaches three parts, not two.

H. Regarding Grudem's claim the spirit can sin, the Old Testament verses do not apply because they refer to unbelievers whose spirits are still separated from the life of God. The only New Testament verse offered is 2 Corinthians 7:1. This verse does not say that the spirit sins, but that it can be "defiled." In context, Paul advocates separation from *external* spiritual influences that could dangerously affect a believer's spirit. But the truth remains that the believer's spirit is one with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). When we sin, it is because we ignore or suppress the spirit (cf. 1 Thess. 5:19) and act out of the soul and body - together referred to metaphorically as flesh (cf. Gal. 5:16).

#### SCRIPTURES TEACHING THREE PARTS

Dichotomists do not adequately respond to the Scriptures supporting three parts in Man.

A. For whatever reason, I have not yet seen a dichotomist scholar acknowledge the glaring reality that Man is made in the Image of the *Triune* God. This is the single greatest reason to believe in our tri-part nature: God is Three in One. Man in God's Image is three in one. No other creature is three-part because no other creature is in God's Image. Angels are spirits. Plants are just material.<sup>27</sup> Animals are body and soul.<sup>28</sup> Only Man is spirit and soul and body. We are the vessels to bridge the spiritual realms and the earthly realm - to issue forth the spiritual into the earthly for the glory of God.

B. I also have yet to see a dichotomist address the three parts of the tabernacle and temple, which are symbolic for the three parts of Man (see Section Three of the booklet). Jesus said He was the temple, and Paul said each of us is the temple of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 2:19-22, 1 Cor. 6:19). Martin Luther, in his commentary on Luke 1:46-47, wrote:

In the tabernacle fashioned by Moses there were three separate compartments. The first was called the holy of holies: here was God's dwelling place, and in it there was no light. The second was called the holy place; here stood a candlestick with seven arms and seven lamps. The third was called the outer court; this lay under the open sky and in the

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<sup>25</sup> Definitely the human spirit, rather than the Holy Spirit, because Paul repeatedly says "my spirit."

<sup>26</sup> This point stands whether someone is a cessationist or not. This verse is true of Paul's gifted, trichotomist experience. But no one should be a cessationist. See "Until the Perfect Comes" at [ProjectOne28.com/gifts](http://ProjectOne28.com/gifts).

<sup>27</sup> Plants are never described as having *nephesh* life in them. This is why Man and animals were commanded to be vegetarians (Gen. 1:29-30), and yet that did not introduce death into the world. Death did not come by eating plants or fruit. Death entered the world through the sin of Adam (Rom. 5:12), and the resultant sacrifice of an animal to clothe Adam and Eve's nakedness (Gen. 3:21, cf. Heb. 9:22).

<sup>28</sup> At least the higher animals have souls; *nephesh* is used of them in Gen. 1:20, 24; 2:19, et al. It should be obvious that a pet dog has mind, emotions, and will. Our souls are not just superior to animals; they are unique because of their ability to interact with a third part (a spirit) in communion with God. Man alone is in the Image of the Triune God (1:26-27).

full light of the sun. In this tabernacle we have a figure of the Christian man. His spirit is the holy of holies, where God dwells in the darkness of faith, where no light is; for he believes that which he neither sees nor feels nor comprehends. His soul is the holy place, with its seven lamps, that is, all manner of reason, discrimination, knowledge, and understanding of visible and bodily things. His body is the forecourt, open to all, so that men may see his works and manner of life.<sup>29</sup>

The architecture of the tabernacle/temple gives so much insight into sourcing and manifesting. We must start with and source from the spirit, for in the spirit we have communion with the Holy Spirit, who guides us into all truth. The soul is the middle part, which must humble its will to receive from the spirit. Then the soul can magnify the spirit's life and express it through the body for all creation to experience the glory of God.

C. Progressive Sanctification. Scripture speaks of our salvation in three tenses:

1. We have been saved (e.g. Eph. 2:8).
2. We are being saved (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:2 ESV).
3. We will be saved (e.g. 1 Cor. 3:15).

All three are true. *We have been saved in spirit*. We receive a new spirit that is born again by the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:26-27, Jn. 3:5-8). Our spirit is one spirit with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:17) - sealed and fully saved (Eph. 1:13-14, 2:6; cf. Col. 2:10). *We are being saved in soul*. Our minds are being renewed in knowledge after the Image of our Creator (Rom. 12:2, Col. 3:10), and we are in the process of obtaining the salvation of our souls as the outcome (1 Pet. 3:9, cf. Jas. 1:21, 1 Cor. 15:2 ESV). Currently, we are outwardly wasting away, but *we will be saved in body* at the Resurrection when we will receive glorified, imperishable, *spiritual* bodies (Mt. 24:13, 1 Cor. 15:42-58). The progression begins in spirit, emanates to the soul, and culminates in the body. Such is the progression in our next verse.<sup>30</sup>

D. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 reads, "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you *completely*, and may your *whole* [1] spirit and [2] soul and [3] body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Dichotomists simply do not do justice to those words in italics. The *complete whole* of Man is spirit and soul and body.

1. Berkhof immediately appealed to *analogia Scriptura*, a Latin phrase instructing us to interpret each verse from within the consistency of all the Scriptures.<sup>31</sup> He claimed that because the rest of the Scriptures teach two-part, this verse should be interpreted as though two-part. This screams of the logical fallacy called begging the question, assuming the conclusion (Scripture says two-part) to make the argument (this verse must be two-part). He used his misinterpretation of inconclusive verses to sidestep a clear verse. The better counsel is to let clear verses mean what they say, helping to interpret the less clear verses.

2. Berkhof and Grudem<sup>32</sup> brush away 1 Thessalonians 5:23 by comparing Matthew 22:37, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your soul" (Mk. 12:30 adds "and with all your strength"). Supposedly, all these verses simply

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<sup>29</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, Ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1956) 21:304. Qtd. in Woodward, 77.

<sup>30</sup> Luther saw intentional order in 1 Thess. 5:23, just as we stress it on page X of the booklet. Luther's commentary on this verse included, "... it is necessary that God preserve, first our spirit, then our soul and body, not only from overt sins but more from false and apparent good works." *Ibid.*, 21:305-306. Qtd. in Woodward, 78.

<sup>31</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 194-195.

<sup>32</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 194. Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 478-479.

pile on synonyms for emphasis. But first, we acknowledge Jesus was answering a question about the Law, quoting a glorious old covenant verse that was shadowed and veiled (2 Cor. 3:5-15, Col. 2:16-17, Heb. 8:5, 10:1). Even realities as essential as the Holy Trinity are veiled in the Old Testament (truly there, but not explicitly blunt, cf. Mt. 28:19). Secondly, this quote from Jesus does not define the triad as “you completely,” “whole.”

Thirdly, *heart* is a different kind of word than *spirit* and *soul*. Heart is a metaphor, whereas soul and spirit are specific elements of Man. In reality, the heart is a physical organ in the body. Heart is used metaphorically to describe the invisible inner core of Man (1 Pet. 3:4), the two immaterial parts (soul and spirit) as a whole. On the other end of the spectrum, flesh is literally skin on the body. Yet it is used metaphorically to describe the essence or actions of Man apart from the Holy Spirit, which are dominated by soul and body together (e.g. Jn. 1:12-13, 3:4-6). Scripture also uses many other body members metaphorically, such as kidneys<sup>33</sup> (similar usage to heart, e.g. ESV fn. of lit. Heb. in Ps. 16:7, 26:2), bowels (for compassion, e.g. lit. Mt. 9:26), and hand (for power, e.g. lit. Dt. 32:36, Josh. 8:20). Hebrew language, carried over to Greek,<sup>34</sup> also used “belly” metaphorically for the inner man, and the belly was considered to have two parts, upper and lower abdomen (stomach and intestines).<sup>35</sup> For example, Proverbs 20:27 and 20:30 are translated as “innermost parts,” but the Hebrew is literally “the chambers of the belly.” Plural chambers: more than one immaterial part. The metaphorical heart, the inner man, is spirit and soul. See [ProjectOne28.com/heart](http://ProjectOne28.com/heart) for Scriptures and diagrams to understand the heart encompasses both spirit and soul just as the tent to the Holy Place encompassed the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

F. Hebrews 4:12 reads, “For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” This verse plainly states that the soul and spirit can be divided. They can be divided because they are different. Thoughts and intentions are not the same. Joints and marrow are not the same; they are different elements within a physical body, but that could not be seen until the priest dissected the sacrifice. Likewise, the difference between our souls and our spirits cannot be perceived, in our fallen state, until the word of God divides. This verse punctuates a deadly serious and practical context (3:7-4:13) and establishes the necessity of this division in order to move from unbelief and disobedience to faith and obedience.

1. Grudem again chalks this up to redundancy of synonyms. Strangely, Grudem argues that “we do not divide joints from marrow, for joints are the places where bones meet, not the places where joints meet marrow.”<sup>36</sup> The point is joints and marrow are different! Marrow parallels spirit in Hebrews 4:12, which is genius because marrow, inside the sheath of bone, produces the life-supply of blood cells, just as the spirit gives life to the soul and body.

2. Berkhof provided a fun admission in the midst of doing gymnastics to avoid the clear reading: “Heb. 4:12 should not be taken to mean that the word of God, penetrating to the

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<sup>33</sup> The remaining nine references all use kidneys as a symbol of the innermost being. This is probably so since in dismembering an animal the kidneys are the last organ to be reached. In this usage it is frequently paralleled with heart....” John N. Oswalt, “*kilya*,” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Eds. R. Laird Harris et al (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1980) 441.

<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, John 7:38 is usually mistranslated with “heart,” but it is literally, “Out of his *belly* will flow rivers of living water.”

<sup>35</sup> *Thayer and Smith's Bible Dictionary*. “Greek Lexicon entry for Koilia.” The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon at [biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/koilia.html](http://biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/koilia.html).

<sup>36</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 479.

inner man, makes a separation between his soul and his spirit, *which would naturally imply that these two are different substances*; but simply as declaring that it brings about a separation in both between the thoughts and intents of the heart” (emphasis mine).<sup>37</sup> This verse does not say the word divides the soul into two parts and the spirit into two parts. Stick with the natural reading of the paralleled tandems: the word of God divides soul and spirit just as a sword divides joint and marrow. A second verb is employed for *discerning* the thoughts and intents of the heart (which are also two distinct elements).

G. Genesis 2:7 describes three parts in the Creation of Man, just as that chapter illustrates three types of trees corresponding to three types of life. With the dust of the ground, the Potter shaped Man’s *body*. The breathing of the Creator’s sustaining life into the nostrils created *spirit*.<sup>38</sup> When spirit entered into body, the third part became a living *soul* (*nephesh*). Soul is the third part. Some scholars and translators treat *nephesh* as creature-like being (as in Gen. 1:20-21, 2:19, et al.), but the whole point of the Creation context is that we are different than other creatures, unique in the Image of the Triune God (see also fn. 27).

Section One (pages 5-7) of the *Spirit, Soul, Body* booklet writes of the three trees and life:

The trees are central characters in the story of Man – here [Gen. 2:8-9, 15-17] and continuing into Genesis 3. Regular trees do not give knowledge or spiritual life, so these trees were clearly both natural and supernatural. The very act of eating is a parable to teach us that we need to receive sustaining life from a source outside of our creaturehood. These trees offered food for the three types of life, corresponding to the three parts of Man. We know this because New Testament Greek employs three different words for life in consistent contexts.<sup>39</sup> *Bios* speaks of the body’s physical life. *Psuchē* means the soul or soul-life. *Zōē* is the spirit’s life given by God’s Spirit. The normally delightful and nutritious trees could be eaten by Adam and Eve’s bodies in the same way we now do for *bios*. But God drew special attention to two trees and placed them center stage in the Garden. The first is the Tree of Life, which the New Testament calls the Tree of *Zōē* (Rev. 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19). The Tree of Life was digested in the spirit and enlivened the spirit. The second special tree was named the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which was eaten in the soul and grew the soul (through the mind).

Such revelation makes sense of why, having eaten the Tree of Knowledge, Man became soulish as opposed to spiritual.

H. 1 Corinthians 15:44-45 reads, “It is sown a soulish<sup>40</sup> body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a soulish body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living soul;<sup>41</sup> the last Adam [Jesus] became a life-giving spirit.” What is the point of contrasting a soulish body and a spiritual body, if there is no contrast between soul and

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<sup>37</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 195.

<sup>38</sup> ProjectOne28.com/spirit supports the relationship between physical air and spiritual spirit, as seen in Hebrew word *ruach*. Adam’s spirit is not to be confused with God’s Holy Spirit. Romans 8:16 distinguishes, “The Spirit himself bears witness with *our spirit* that we are children of God.”

<sup>39</sup> ProjectOne28.com/life studies these facts in detail.

<sup>40</sup> The Greek word is *psuchikos*, which is the adjective form of the root noun, *psuche* (soul). Modern translators do so much damage to the Body of Christ by failing (with “natural”) to maintain the root word (soul) in the adjective soulish. Readers see “natural” and think physical, instead of what God communicated, soulish. And so the Body of Christ, at large, remains soulish and unaware.

<sup>41</sup> The Greek word is *psuche*, which is most literally *soul*. Translators again muddy up the contrast: the soul in Adam propagated soulish bodies, but the spirit of Christ will propagate spiritual bodies.

spirit? Dichotomists would have us think those words could be swapped<sup>42</sup> without affecting meaning, because they are supposedly synonyms. Therefore, we might as well paraphrase, "It is sown a spiritual body; it is raised a soulish body. Adam became a living spirit; Jesus became a life-giving soul." That would be foolish. The only reason this passage makes sense is because soul and spirit are two different parts inside one body. The first body is inappropriately dominated by and characterized by the soul. The soul has usurped the greatest influence. But thank God in Christ, we will receive a body that is led by, filled with, and wholly characterized by spirit. We will be saturated with God, who is spirit, and He will be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). Hallelujah!

I. First Corinthians 2:8-3:3 highlights the glory and necessity of the Spirit's ministry to our spirits. To quote for brevity only verses 12-15 (lit.):

But we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, in order that we might understand the things freely given us by God, which things we also are speaking, not in words taught by human wisdom, but taught by the Spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things. But a *soulish*<sup>43</sup> man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to know, because they are *spiritually discerned*. But the spiritual man discerns all things indeed.

These verses serve as setup for Paul to explicitly declare in the following verses (3:1-4) that the believers in Corinth were soulish and fleshly instead of spiritual. This again proves a serious distinction between soul and spirit. It stresses our need to submit the soul to the spirit's ability to receive from the Holy Spirit. Our spirits receive the Holy Spirit, and only our spirits can discern the Spirit's ministry of teaching all that we have been freely given from God. Our spirits can help our souls understand, if our souls submit and quiet the mind to learn by faith.

## CONCLUSION

Dichotomists sincerely mistake the parts of Man. The Scriptures do not use *spirit* and *soul* interchangeably. In fact, the Scriptures often contrast *spirit* and *soul*, imploring us to submit our souls and to become spiritual disciples that we may issue forth the Spirit's life from the spiritual realm into the physical realm. Every facet of the Gospel story affects all three parts of Man: Creation, Fall, tabernacle, Incarnation, redemption, discipleship, and eternal salvation. We hope and pray you study these truths in the *Spirit, Soul, Body* booklet, and apply them to your spiritual discipleship.

"Oh, *magnify* the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!" (Ps. 34:3, cf. Lk. 1:46-47).

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<sup>42</sup> Grudem actually dares this elsewhere. 1 Cor. 14:14 reads, "My spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful." Grudem wrote, "Paul probably could equally have said, 'My soul prays but my mind is unfruitful'" (*Systematic Theology*, 480). That is quite wrong, as this example from 1 Cor. 15:44-45 exaggerates.

<sup>43</sup> The Greek word is *psuchikos*, which is the adjective form of the root noun, *psuchē* (soul). Modern translators do so much damage to the Body of Christ by failing (with "natural") to maintain the root word (soul) in the adjective *soulish*. Readers see "natural" and think physical, instead of what God communicated, soulish. NIV does even worse with "the man without the Spirit," which not only mistranslates, but forces the interpretation that this soulish man must be an unbeliever. Paul's point in context is that the Corinthian *believers* were soulish, not spiritual (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-4).