



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Anthropology: The Mystery of Man, *or* the Crises of Identity”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] We are grateful to Thee, Lord, for the study of the Scriptures. And we ask again for Thy blessing upon us as we turn to a subject that is of such great significance and relevance for us, who are men. And we pray that as we ponder the subject of man, his sin, we pray that the Holy Spirit may enable us to understand ourselves before Thy face, in Thy presence.

May, again, the Spirit be our teacher. And may we be responsive; may we be anxious to learn the things that have to do with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, ultimately. And so continue Thy sanctifying ministry in our hearts and in our lives. And edify us and strengthen us and motivate us through the Scriptures.

We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

[Message] Tonight, let's turn for our Scripture reading to Psalm 8, verses 1 through 9. Psalm 8, verses 1 through 9.

Psalm 8, verses 1 through 9 is a lyrical treatise on the creation. I'm sure that David pondered, in his mind, those verses in Genesis chapter 1 and out of his meditation upon them, he wrote this great 8<sup>th</sup> Psalm, used in the New Testament as a messianic psalm. It is in more than one place referred to our Lord Jesus Christ, not because he is only a man

but because he is the perfect man. And so, the psalm that speaks of man in his ideal relationship before God speaks of our Lord. Verse 1:

“O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth, who hast displayed Thy splendor above the heavens! From the mouth of infants and nursing babes Thou has established strength because of Thine adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease. When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man that Thou dost take thought of him, and the son of man that Thou dost care for him?

Yet Thou have made him a little lower than God, and dost crown him with glory and majesty! Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, whatever passes through the paths of the seas. (It’s obvious that the psalmist regards man as a king. He is lord of the creation.) O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Thy name in all the earth!”

The Mystery of Man, how perplexing, and yet how relevant and important. Reinhold Niebuhr, one of the great neo-orthodox theologians wrote in one of his most famous books, “Man has always been his most vexing problem.” And then, one of our Evangelical theologians, Professor G. C. Berkouwer, of the Free University of Amsterdam, has written, “Today, more than at any time, the question, ‘what is man’ is at the center of theological and philosophical concerns.’

It’s a rather interesting thing, I think, that man can ignore God, but he cannot ignore man. And anyone who things in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has to think about man. He may seek, in the most devious of ways, to avoid thinking of God but he cannot avoid thinking of himself.

The perplexity of the problem of man is seen in the variety of the answers that have been given to the question, "What is man?" Let me read you a few of them.

Man is that nature which is able to will. We would simplify it and say, He is a willer.

Man is that animated being which experiences. He is an experiencer. That sounds like an existentialist's definition.

Then, here is something that approaches Christianity; but not really. He is a depraved (I'm thinking of a Calvinist when he says depraved, but then he says.) animal. Now, that is not an accident because many men do not think that man is anything more than an animal.

Man is the suppressor of instincts. Man is a thinking animal. That's open to question.

Man is that person that bores himself. [Laughter] I rather like that definition.

One of our great thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin has said, "Man is the ascending arrow of the great biological synthesis." Now, that's not very clear and frankly I don't know what he means, but that was his definition.

Why, of all things, should the question, "What is man?" be a problem to us? Is there anything in our human experience that is more known to us than man? Why should the definition of man be so difficult for men? Do we not all experience human nature in every conceivable relationship? Every one of us? Why do we have difficulty with the question, 'What is man?' Who does not know man?

And what is, I think, remarkable in the light of the difficulty of this question, apparently, is the amazing and fantastic knowledge that man has of other things. Think of his knowledge of machines. Think of his knowledge of electronics. Think of his knowledge of such things as lasers. Think of his knowledge of space. And if you can think of his knowledge of molecular biology without becoming pale with fright, think of

that. Man has now discovered DNA, which is, many scientists feel, the heart of life. It is the master molecule of life, some have called it.

He thinks now that he can even control the process of evolution; slowing it down or speeding it up, particularly slowing it down as he may wish. Not only that, but by means of his knowledge of genetics, the new genetics, he now feels that he is able through surgery to take the evil and violence out of the mind of man.

I preached last weekend. The weekend before last in Portland, Oregon. And while I was in a supermarket in Portland, I noticed a magazine or a newspaper there, entitled, (I’d never seen it before, this shows how ignorant I am.) *The National Enquirer*. It’s not a very high-level publication, I could tell that. But it had an interesting headline on the outside of it, something about man and so I bought it for an illustration. And I turned to the page, and I have it before me. And the headlines are: Brain surgery could transform the most violent murderer into a normal citizen. Since that time, I’ve done a little investigation and this is a rather common claim of genetic surgeons. They do feel it is possible now to locate that particular part of the human brain that is responsible for violence and that they can so act upon that part of the human brain that they may be able to eliminate violence from men.

Now, all I can say is there are going to be a lot of operations performed if that is possible. Illustrations have been given of men who were placed in -- or who dared to get into an arena with a bull and with an electronic device were able to, as the bull rushed at them, were able to so touch his brain with electronic impulses that suddenly the bull became just as tame as a little dog. An amazing thing to think about, genetic surgery.

Not only that, not only is violence capable of being cured, according to many of the genetic men, but we may even be able to discover the secret of memory. We may even be able to take knowledge pills that will enable us to have instant German, instant French. So, as you get ready to pack to go abroad, you just take a pill and you’ll be able to converse with the Germans, or the Swiss, or the French; whoever it is that you wish to

converse with. Not only instant German, but instant tennis. You may want to play in Wimbledon, while you are in Britain, so you may take a pill or two and enter Wimbledon, and fight Stan Smith, or Ilie Nastase, or some of the other great tennis men.

And yet, in spite of this, I’ve only given you a few of the things that appeared in the special article in Time Magazine last year. Man into Superman: The Promise and Peril of the New Genetics.

The idea of re-shaping life. Amazing how much we know about life but how little we know about man. If there is one thing that we have learned from the study of man it is that, though we may have learned to harness the material, the physical world, we have not learned to harness the spiritual world or the moral world at all.

So it’s an amazing thing that we are puzzled by men.

Niebuhr said, also, “It is not unfair to affirm that modern culture, that is our culture since the Renaissance, is to be credited with the greatest advances in the understanding of nature and, with the greatest confusion, in the understanding of man.”

On the Temple of Apollo at Delphi is the famous Greek inscription: *Nothbe Say Alton*. Know Thyself. An inscription that has been traced to Socrates, to Thales, and to others, but it expresses a truth of human nature.

It is obvious, I think, to us that if we could come to know ourselves, then not only would we have power, but, undoubtedly, a peace of mind that we, as human beings, do not have.

So, we are in a crisis of anthropology. Anthropology is the study of man. *Anthropos* in Greek means man. *Logos* means reason, utterance, discourse. And so that is what we are going to study, anthropology, or the study of man; and also, hamartiology, for they go together. *Hamartia*, sin and *logos*, the study of sin.

We are in a crises of anthropology. It is part of modern man’s predicament. Adrift at sea, largely unaware of the depth of his peril, through the mist and the fog of his own

making, he strains to find a deliverance that is not there because he does not look above. And it is only from above that man will ever discover who he is and why he is here.

John Calvin suggested this, when he wrote, “Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself, unless he has first looked upon God’s face and then descends from contemplating Him to scrutinize himself.”

Now, the reason that Calvin is so right is, simply, this: The Bible tells us that man was created in the image of God. So, I think it should be obvious to us, that one of the ways that we learn of ourselves is to learn of God. And the reverse is true as well. One of the ways that we may learn of God is to look at man. So the answer to the question ‘What is man?’ is related to the question ‘Who is God?’

Well, tonight’s our introduction, so we want to talk about history, and then we want to talk, briefly, about the Biblical doctrine. And I want to close with a couple of observations. So Roman 1 in our outline, the history of the doctrine of man.

Whenever you study a subject in the Bible, it is always, I think, of the greatest help to take a look at what men have thought about that subject down through the centuries. And so we’re going to attempt a brief survey of the past with its primary issues and the major doctrines that have been taught by men.

The primary issues have been these: What is the constitutional nature of man? Is man dichotomous? That is, is he made up of two parts? Or is he made up of three parts? Is he body, or material and immaterial? Or is he body, soul, and spirit? Is he body and spirit, or so dichotomous? Or trichotomous? Three parts? Body, soul, and spirit? Two parts or three? That’s one of the questions that we shall face.

How did the soul originate? By the way, that is a very significant and relevant question for it touches the issue of abortion, which has now become a political issue. When does the fetus obtain its soul? When it is born? When it is conceived? Before its conception? The views that men have held concerning the nature of life in the soul is important -- or are important. So, the origin of the soul? Origen believed, for example,

that the soul was in existence before conception and went to become a part of the fetus after conception.

Many Christians, particularly Lutherans have believed that the soul is passed down from mother and father in the act of procreation to children. That’s traducianism. And then there are a large number of Christians who have believed in creationism; that is, that there is a fresh creation by God at the conception of every human being and that while he possesses his soul from the moment of conception, it is a fresh creation of God. Creationism. A great majority of Evangelical Protestants have held that view. That’s one of the issues.

The nature of God’s image in man. What does it mean when it says, Man is in the image of God? Or sin and grace: relative to man’s fall and its effect upon the will. When man fell, and he fell into sin, was his will touched by that sin? If so, can we say that man is free? Can we say that man has a free will?

Now, these are all questions that involve the study of man. They are issues. They are issues among Roman Catholics. They are issues among the Protestants. And I want to tell you, that some of these touch the very nature of the gospel; such as that last one, for the question of whether man has a free will is a question that touches the grace of God in our salvation. Are you semi-Pelagian in your doctrine? Most evangelical Christians probably are. But they don’t know why they are in error on that point.

Well now, that’s just a little introduction to Roman 1 and capital A. I know some of you are looking around, now where is that in my outline? That’s not in the outline. It’s in the introduction. Capital D. The pre-Reformation views of man. The pre-Reformation views of man. (Did that get on the board? Yes.)

Now, let’s think for a moment about the views of man that were held before the time of the Protestant Reformation. In. [Laughter] That’s like saying, “On what night did the Carter’s Saturday night take place?” In the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, the Protestant Reformation took place and so we are thinking about the views of man before the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. All

modern views of human nature are adaptations, transformations, modifications of two distinctive views of man: The classical view and the Christian view.

In Medieval Times, during the time of Roman Catholic ascendancy, these two views, the classical view of man and the Christian view of man, were merged into a kind of synthesis, which Roman Catholics call Thomasistic Philosophy, or Thomasistic Thought. They like to think of it as Christian thought. Modern culture begins with the destruction of this synthesis in the Renaissance and the Reformation.

So, capital 1, the classical view of man. What did men in the time of the classical age think about man? Well, they thought that man was to be understood, chiefly, from the standpoint of his rational faculties, his *gnos*, his mind. They thought of his *gnos* or his mind as the immortal principle, which enters man from without; and thus, it was largely a divine principle which entered into man. Man, then, was a rational being. And because he possessed reason, *logos*, *gnosis*, he was immortal.

Man’s body is the material, the substance in which evil inheres. So to the ancient man, the body was sinful by definition, largely. And the soul was immortal. This body-mind dualism, man made up of a body, which was like a kind of prison, was sinful; evil of itself. His mind or his spirit, his *logos*, his reason; well, that was divine. But the two had to live together for a while. And so, the ancients, particularly the Greeks, who were particularly affected by this platonic type of philosophy, were extremely anxious to reach the stage when the soul would no longer dwell in the prison-house of the body.

Now, you know that has a great deal of relevance to the New Testament itself? Because, in the great 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians, probably the greatest chapter on the resurrection in the New Testament, that was one of the things that Paul had to contend with. Apparently, after he had preached the Gospel to them in Corinth, some had come in among them and had said to them, ‘Well this doctrine of the resurrection of the body, that’s a bad thing because the body is evil. Why would you wish a resurrection of the body? What we are much more interested in having is a kind of spiritual resurrection in



which the body did not take part.” And so the apostle had to deal with the question of the resurrection of the body; and point out, along the way, that the body of itself is not sinful, that it is comprehended within the purpose and plan of God, and that the Christian doctrine is the resurrection of the body.

Now, you know, you will find that this error -- this Greek error -- is even a modern error in our Christian churches. You will find people, for example, in supposedly evangelical Churches on Easter speaking about the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as if it is nothing more than the living-on of the influence of our Lord. They speak about a spiritual resurrection. They do not like to speak about a bodily resurrection. And even today, it is very unpopular in a large segment of Christianity to speak about the bodily resurrection. That is a carryover of Greek thought.

This body-mind dualism stands in the greatest contrast to the biblical picture, for the Bible knows nothing of a good mind and an evil body. The body, of itself, is not evil. The body is comprehended within the plan of God. As a result of the fall, there now dwells in it the sin principle, but the body is not evil of itself. And, furthermore, the idea that the mind is good is also wrong, for the Bible makes very plain that our minds are darkened as a result of sin.

Now, this Classical View of man has also influenced us in other ways. Not only has it influenced us in our doctrine of the resurrection; but it is also communicated to us as it did the Medieval Church, along these lines: since we are in a sinful body, then part of the problem of the Christian life and part of the struggle of the Christian life is to deny the body its pleasures, its longings, its lusts, its passions. And so there arose a form of asceticism. Paul refers to it, “Touch not, taste not, handle not.” And the dregs of a great deal of this is in Evangelical Christianity with its: Thou shalt not. Thou shalt not. Thou shalt not. Which we call the “Christian Taboos.”

Now, all you have to do is travel around the country to know that taboos are different in the Eastern States from those in the Southern States. Those in the South are

different than those in the West. In the South, for example, it’s bad to have mixed bathing in a great company of the professing Christian host in the South. Now, just about three weeks ago when I was here, we had some men who wanted to talk about forming a new church in one of the small cities of North Texas, and a couple of the men came up to speak to me. And afterwards, they asked me some things about Believer’s Chapel. They didn’t know a whole lot about it. And one of the questions the men asked was, “Do you believe in mixed bathing?” Now, I did not grow up in a Baptist church and so, I did not even know what that meant when someone mentioned that to me, at first. I said, “Ah, no, of course not. Don’t believe in mixed bathing.” [Laughter]

And then they informed me that that meant in a bathing suit in a swimming pool; two different sexes, and then, I must confess I was really floored by my ignorance as well as by their particular doctrine. But, nevertheless, this is a carryover, you see, of the idea that the body is bad and that we must do everything that we can to inhibit those lusts and passions, which flow naturally from it.

Now, mind you, I’m not going to get off into this, there is a great deal on that in the Bible. Paul does have some very, very significant words to say about keeping our body under. And we must not go to the extreme of saying, that, because we are not believers in the fact that the body is evil of itself, that we therefore, may do anything that we please. Paul’s doctrine is surely contrary to that. But, I think you can see, where our taboos arose.

Well, let’s move on to the medieval view of man. Medieval scholasticism, especially that of Thomas Aquinas, the great Roman Catholic theologian, makes a sharp dualism of nature and grace -- the natural and the supernatural -- reason and faith. The image of God to Aquinas was a natural endowment which God gave man by creation. But he did not equate the image of God with the likeness of God. He saw the likeness of God as something different from the image of God. And he saw the likeness as a supernatural gift, which was received after creation, but before the fall, which enabled

unfallen man to fight the desires of his flesh, which he naturally had. So to Aquinas, there was one part of man, the image of God, in which there was a lurking concupiscence, or desire. It is not sin until yielded to. But man was given -- Adam was given -- the image -- the likeness of God as well as the image of God, which they called a gift super-added, which made him righteous. And that second gift enabled him to live apart from sin.

Now, Aquinas believed that when man fell, the image of God remained, but the likeness of God he lost. And as a result of that, fallen man is held to be, basically, the same as Adam was when he was created before he received this *‘donum supra additum’* this likeness of God added to him.

Now, the way that you as a man now obtain this work of grace, this likeness of God, which enables you to fight and conquer sin; the way you obtain it is becoming a Roman Catholic, because, the Roman Catholic Church controls the means of grace. And so, as you confess the faith, are baptized, observe the ordinances properly, make your confession properly, live as the church desires you to live, then you shall receive the likeness of God.

As you can see from this, man is not radically corrupted. His nature is only wounded, or weakened, by the fall and this is the Roman Catholic view to this day. He is not totally depraved. Man’s reason and man’s will are exactly as they were when Adam walked the Garden of Eden. And so, consequently, man has a free will for Adam had a free will. Man’s will is untouched by sin for Adam’s will, before the fall, was untouched by sin.

Now, this is semi-Pelagianism. The Roman Catholics believe that man has a free will. Now, they’re not the only ones, of course. Not only have the Roman Catholics believed that, but the Armenians, also, have believed it. The Armenians, when you think of Armenianism, the followers of Jacob Armenius, you should think of Wesleyans, you should think of Methodists -- not all -- but Methodists. You should think of Pentecostals. Nazarene, Church of God. Churches such as this, in general. Individuals may differ. But

those churches have been semi-Pelagian in their doctrine for they have held that man has a free will.

Now, if you will listen carefully, in the Evangelical preaching of today, you will discover that many preachers believe in free will and preach in our Evangelical churches that are not Wesleyian, or Methodist, or Pentecostal, but are Bible churches, independent churches, churches such as this church and other churches; for semi-Pelagianism is not traceable to one group or several groups only, it’s part of the residuum of the belief that there is, really, something in man to which God may appeal and find merit.

Now, to stir you up a little more, when I preached in Portland two weeks ago, one lady came up to me and said, “You know, I felt this whole week that there’s been a tension every time you got up to speak.” And I was speaking on a lot of these things about the elders and the deacons in the church; and the women in the church, and things like this, and it was only natural you know. And then I got off on the subject of semi-Pelagianism and free will. And the reason I do this is not because I feel that this is the most important thing to preach. The reason I do it is because my brethren neglected so. If they preached on it, I wouldn’t bother to do it. But they never do. And I think it’s important that you know these things.

Now, let me -- suppose I were to say to you, What you need to do is be on positive volition? What would you think about that? You see, that kind of teaching, which suggests that I may, of myself, be on positive volition is semi-Pelagianism. It suggests that there is something in man that is acceptable to God. It suggests that man has a free will. So, Roman Catholics, the medieval view of man, was that man was not totally depraved; man was weakened, man was wounded, but not totally depraved.

Now, you know, of course, that one of the five points of Calvinism -- so-called five points of Calvinism -- their answer to the remonstrance was that man is totally depraved. Unfortunately, that little expression is often misunderstood by people. They are inclined to think that that means the total corruption of human nature. And so, when they see a

man, who is obviously not a Christian, do something good, they say, “How can you possibly believe in total depravity when here is a man who has performed a good deed?” Now, the doctrine of total depravity does not teach that man’s human nature is totally corrupted. It teaches the corruption of the “whole” human nature; that is, that every part of man is touched by sin. Every part of man is touched by sin. Not that every part of man is totally touched by sin so that he is only evil and only evil may issue.

Now, if we were speaking of divine standards, we could even say that. For, when we talk about divine standards, then we are talking about something that is perfection; and consequently, everything that man does does falls short of God. But the doctrine of total depravity is the doctrine of the corruption of the whole human nature, not the total corruption of human nature, and I hope that you remember that.

Now, let’s come to the Reformation views of man, capital B. The Reformers made a radical break with Aquinas’ nature and grace dichotomy. They returned to the biblical pattern of creation of sin and redemption by grace. They returned to Augustinian-ism as over against semi-Pelagianism. Now, the two men that I want to say just a word about are Luther and Calvin; for they are the two great reformers.

First, the views of Luther, Arabic 1 in our outline. Luther saw the image of God in the whole man, body and soul. In other words, he saw the image of God as touching the whole of the man and, furthermore, he saw it as completely lost after the fall. Luther, when he talks about the capacities for man says that, “Before the fall, Adam’s eyes were sharper and clearer than those of the lynx and the eagle. He was stronger than the lion or the bear, which he handled and commanded like a trained dog.” Now, I’d like to have seen that. It may well have been true, but that is Luther’s imagination of man in the image of God.

Now, Luther believed that that was completely lost as a result of the fall. And you cannot say that man, today, is in the image of God. He did believe that, through the redemption that Jesus Christ accomplished, it is possible for man to be restored to the

image of God. He referred to such passages as Colossians chapter 3, verse 10. And you might find your Bible and take a look at the verse with me. Colossians chapter 3, verse 10. Paul says: (By the way, I hope you are reading your Bibles. I finished on June the 30<sup>th</sup>, and I’m not in the Book of Exodus on my second time through. Now, two or three-people have been reading their Bibles as a result of this, so I’m going to keep talking about it. Twice in ’72. ) Have you found Colossians, page 310, chapter 3, verse 10. Isn’t that interesting? Notice what Paul says:

“And have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.”

And so it is the work of sanctification today to restore man to the image of God. So to Luther, then, man was created in the image of God, but in the fall he completely lost it. Through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, we are being restored to the image of God.

Second, the views of Calvin. Calvin, who was the greatest theologian of the Reformation period, contended that philosophers have gone astray because they overlook the fall in discussing the nature of man. He says that, “Men who overlook the nature of the fall are like men seeking in a ruin for a building. They are like men who are looking in scattered fragments for a well-knit structure.” Now, that is a beautiful picture of modern philosophers who are looking for man and, unfortunately, the modern philosopher frequently finds the building in the midst of the rubble. For, his idea is that man is still essentially good.

Calvin agreed with Luther, in that through the work of Jesus Christ, man could be restored to the image of God. But Calvin did not agree with Luther in Luther’s views that the image of God was completely lost in the fall. That may surprise you. You would think it might be more Calvinistic to believe that the image was completely lost. But

Calvin was a good Bible student, and he knew the teaching of Scripture. And he knew that there were texts that plainly said that man was still in the image of God.

Can you think of one? Can you think of one that says that man is still in the image of God? Anyone? Well, I’m going to show you one. 1 Corinthians chapter 11 in verse 7. 1 Corinthians chapter 11 in verse 7. Paul writes:

“For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and the glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.”

So there is a plain statement. Paul says that man is the image and the glory of God. And that even that in his fallen state -- for he writes of man in his fallen state -- man is in the image of God.

Now, we’re going to devote considerable time to the image of God later, and so, I do not want to enter into any discussion of this. But I want you to notice that Calvin and Luther agreed in that man was created in the image of God. Luther said that man lost the image completely in his fall. Calvin said, no, man did not lose the image completely. Although, Calvin said what remains is a frightful deformity. He said that man was mutilated and disease ridden. And, further, he agreed with Luther in believing that it was the work of God, through the saving work of Christ, to restore man to the image of God in sanctification. So, these two reformers agreed in everything but the loss of the image of God at the fall. And Calvin felt that man, still, was in the image of God, though deformed, disease-ridden, and mutilated.

Now, let’s come to modern views of man, capital C. The modern view of man is a curious compound of the classical, the biblical, and the distinctively modern motifs.

Now, I’m going to develop these details later as we study the various aspects of the Scriptural Doctrine of Man, but there is one notable thing that I want to notice tonight. And that is, modern man’s optimistic treatment of the problem of evil.

Now, this takes two related tacts. First of all, he rejects sin as the center of man's personality. That is, sin in mans' will. He does not believe that man is a sinner in his will. I think it is -- this is my own opinion -- in the preaching of the Gospel. There are lots of my Christian friends who believe that the reason that man does not respond to the Gospel in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is because he has intellectual problems with the facts of Christianity. I do not believe that at all.

In the first place, I believe that no man ever responds to any Gospel message if the Holy Spirit does not prepare his heart for the reception; set forth the Gospel in the most beautiful logic, the most beautiful system, and men are just as blind and dead to it as is possible for a person to be, as I am dead to modern genetics.

Now, that is not why men do not respond to the Gospel. The reason men do not respond to the Gospel is because the Gospel comes to them with the proclamation that they are dead in sin, and they regard that as totally irrelevant. They have been taught and taught, and they have read, they have studied. They have read their newspapers. They have read their magazines. They have heard their parents. They have been to school. They've listened to their teachers. Every influence is designed to teach man that there is something essentially good in him and that if they will only look far enough, they will find it.

Or, sooner or later, it will manifest itself. "I have faith in the great American people." "I have faith in the fact that you will make the right decision at this convention." "I believe that it is possible for all of us to look forward to greater things in the future than we have ever known before."

Nonsense! Nonsense!

Now, that is why, when you come to man and you preach the Gospel to them, and you say, "Now, we must begin with you are a sinner." And that is so irrelevant to their thinking that there is no possible way for you to penetrate. That is the difficulty. And it is the work of the Holy Spirit -- and the Holy Spirit alone -- to bring man to a



conviction of his sin, contrary to every kind of influence that he meets in 1972. He has an essentially easy conscience. Reinhold Niebuhr said. And he was not a member of an Evangelical church.

Now, what is the consequence of this? Well, if we really believe that man is essentially good, it is only natural to believe in the idea of progress, which is a secularized version of the biblical apocalyptic climax.

In the case of the Bible, the Bible says that men are sinners, that they are indwelt by the sin principle and that there is a conflict between light and darkness, which is finally going to issue in the Great Apocalypse, the judgments of the Book of Revelation and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ to establish order in the earth.

Now, the secularized version of this is that man is essentially good; and that we are struggling and struggling and struggling and making progress and making progress. See science. Look at what science has done. Look at all the advances we have made. Things are going to get better and better and better and better until we have a form of millennial kingdom on the earth but brought about by man.

So the idea of man as a sinner and man as involved in progress; these are related things. Now, we have had in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century reactions against this, and I’m also going to speak also this in neo-orthodoxy and also in some liberalism. For some of the men have recognized the fact that with two World Wars, and with all of the other things that we have faced in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, that it is a difficult feat to believe that man is essentially good and that things are getting better and better as we go along. But we have lived so long under the other influence that it is difficult for us to think Biblically any longer.

The poet, Swinburne, wrote, “The seal of his knowledge is sure, the truth and his spirit are wed; Glory to man in the highest. For man is the master of things.” Proving, that progress includes progress in pride.

Teilard de Chardin, wrote of men, “They were fathoming everything, trying everything, extending everything, on their way to an ultimate omega point of shared

godhood.” That’s what we’re doing. We’re going toward the omega point of shared godhood, all of us.

Now, let me come to the biblical doctrine of man, which we’re only going to touch lightly now. This Biblical teaching is founded upon the doctrine of divine revelation. In other words, the biblical teaching has as its fundamental base the fact that in the Bible we have a revelation of God. Now, we’re not going to speculate as humans do when the philosophize, but we’re going to look, so Christians’ say, in God’s book, and listen to a revelation from God.

Now, you can see that my suppositions are that the Bible is a revelation of God. So the authority of the word of God is the authority of the Christian.

Now, from this, I am going to only attempt a brief summary, but I think you will see that if we do agree that man is, as the Bible says he is, and that Christ has done what the Bible has said he has done, and that as a result of this that man may become what the Bible says what he may become; then, what parades under the term “Christianity” in liberal churches is not Christianity at all. It’s not a question of being a poor version of Christianity. It’s not even Christianity at all.

J. Gresham Machen, one of the great Evangelicals of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, wrote a book called Christianity and Liberalism. And that -- it was his conclusion, for he looked at the doctrines of liberalism and he looked at the doctrines of the Bible, and he said that when you come right down to it, liberal Christianity does not deserve the designation Christian for it does not really hold to the essential fundamental doctrines of the New Testament and Old Testament revelations.

There are three simple features in biblical Christianity, capital A, Man as Created. The Bible states that man is the unique and special creation of God. He is not the product of evolutionary processes. He was placed in the Garden of Eden in covenant relation to God. He was told that he was able to do this; but he was not able to do that. Genesis chapter 2, verses 16 and 17, set forth the parts of that pact. He was made lord

over the creation, as the Psalmist said. “Though hast put all things under his feet.” Man was a king in his domain. He was lord of the creation. He was made in the image of God. That, by the way, is one of the things that people believe the ‘image of God’ means. That he is a dominion haver. In other words, there elects within all of us the desire to be king. That’s why when J.F.K. said, when somebody asked him why he wanted to be president, he spoke his mind and the mind of many a man. He said, “It’s the place of power.” He could be a king again.

Now, secondly, man has fallen. The second chapter of Genesis sets forth that. And so we learn from this that sin -- sin does not inhere in man’s finiteness for he was finite when created and God said, ‘what I see if very good.’ Sin in not finiteness. Sin is not creatureliness. Sin is essentially unbelief.

Now, often you hear men say, sin is rebellion against God. Sin is the desire to be god. Sin is the desire to be autonomous. Now, that is an effect of sin. Sin is unbelief. Sin says God does not mean what he says he means in his word and so, as a result of this, I will rebel against him. And so if we were putting a diagram here of the relationship of sin and rebellion, and trying to describe it, we would say: sin is unbelief, which leads to rebellion, which, in turn, leads to immorality. And this is the way it goes. But this is the essential thing. Sin is unbelief.

Now, as a result of man’s unbelief, he fell. And as a result of his fall and God’s judgment, sin now, like a cancer, permeates his whole being. And it permeates his emotions so that they are not pure. It permeates his mind so that he is blinded, the New Testament says, to spiritual things. And it also touches his will. So he has no free will. When he wills apart from God’s enablement, he wills that which is contrary to the will of God. His will that he has is the result of what is in his inmost being, his understanding. And, consequently, because he is touched by sin, his will is touched by sin.

Now, it is the work of the Holy Spirit, in turn, so that man may -- with his will -- for he has a will to exercise, he may be freed from sin and thus decide for God. But that is as a result of the working of the Holy Spirit in his heart and the gift of new life.

As I’ve often said to you, I decide that I’m going out to watch the Cowboys play football, not autonomously, but because I like football, so that my decision is the product of what understanding and desires I have within my inmost being. Our wills are touched by sin.

Now, man is redeemed. The entire redemptive process is the divine plan of renewal. I read that passage in Colossians 3, which speaks of renewal in the image of God. And so it is the work of God, after we have fallen, after we have been worked upon by the Holy Spirit, after we have been given new life through the new birth, it is the work of God to renew us into the place and status that we had in the beginning in Adam, the image of God. That’s the process of sanctification’s aim or goal, to become again what we were. Now, Paul speaks of it as, to become like Jesus Christ. For example, to take one passage, in Romans chapter 8 in verse 29 and verse 30, Paul writes:

“For whom he foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

And, whom he predestined, these he also called, and whom he called these he also justified, and whom he justified these -- by the way, is anyone lost in the process? No, every one who is called is justified. Every one is justified is glorified. Not a word is lost in the process. And, furthermore, he says: “And whom he justified, these he also (Not “will glorify” but) glorified.” It is so certain; he puts it in the past tense. So, you really are going to be like Jesus Christ someday, in spite of what you are now.

What is the work of salvation? The work of salvation, then, is to recognize these facets of man’s nature. Rembrandt has painted a beautiful picture which expresses

something that is fundamental to Christianity. That painting is called, *The Raising of the Cross*. You may have seen it. It’s a picture of the cross and a picture of the people about the cross. And if you look very carefully at the people around the cross, you will discover that not only has Rembrandt painted a realistic picture of what he thought our Lord’s crucifixion scene looked like; but he painted his own picture into the scene. And there he is. And he was trying to get over the fact, and the truth, that it was he, as much as anyone else, who was responsible for the death of our Lord.

May I make one or two concluding observations? Roman 3. It’s no wonder that modern man is so confused. His liberal, idealistic, humanistic faith has been shattered by two World Wars, violence, enmity, and other forms of evil, and the result is that he has lost his sense of God, and he’s lost his sense of himself, no longer having any Christian influence. He no longer lives by the empty perfume bottle, smelling some of the odors that came from a Christianity of centuries ago. But now, he’s in the grip of despair, or angst, as the Germans put it. And Pascal said, “You know, his misery is the misery of a nobleman. The misery of a dethroned king.” And that’s true, for he’s not what he was created to be and yet, deep down within him he knows that there is something there that is unanswered by his own environment.

Two comments, which I’ll develop later. Capital A, without the knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God. Our endowments lead to him. And it is only as we look at ourselves that we are able to come to know God fully, completely, accurately. And the second, the corollary of it, without the knowledge of God there is no knowledge of ourselves. Since we are in the image and likeness of God, the need to know ourselves is obvious. True self-knowledge can only come in the knowledge of God, for we are made in the image of God.

Next time, the Creation of Man and the Problem of Evolution. Let’s bow in prayer.

“The Myster of Man, or the Crises of Identity” by S. Lewis Johnson  
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[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the work of the Holy Spirit who has wrought in our hearts, bringing us new life, leading us to faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us. And we pray, Lord, that the work of sanctification whereby we are brought into the image, to the likeness and image of God may continue under Thy direction to Thy glory. We commit each one present to Thee for the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.