

THE MAKING OF MAN

by Ray C. Stedman

Last night I sat in the airport of Guatemala City, working on the final stages of this message. Facing me on the wall was a large mural, depicting life among the ancient Mayan Indians. As I sat in that fascinating country, under the shadow of great volcanoes which had been rumbling, muttering and threatening all afternoon, and thought of the history of the Mayans -- that strange race we know so little about -- I felt anew the mystery of history. Civilizations have risen and flourished for centuries and then in a strange way, often for unknown reasons, have died and are now buried in humid jungles, forgotten fragments of ancient history. The question came to me again as it comes to any who think long about the past, Where did this race of ours begin? How did this strange race of beings of which we are members come into existence? For what purpose?

These are questions that have forever fascinated men. There is only one book, to my knowledge, that gives us a reliable answer to these questions. Scientists, of course, are trying to discover facts from the ancient past, but even they admit that their efforts are but a kind of feeling around in the dark after a few fragments. But this book of God, bearing upon it the seal of authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, has revealed to us all man needs to know to solve the riddle of life. I wish I could impress upon young and old alike the truth of that statement. Here is all we need to know about humanity, revealed in the pages of Scripture, especially designed that we might know the facts about life.

When we move from Genesis 1 into Genesis 2, it is obvious that we come into a different atmosphere. Genesis 1 is a very simple narrative of the creation of the world; the heavens and the earth, the plants and animals, and finally man. Simple, yet majestic in its beauty and profound in its depth. But when we come to Chapter 2 we find a kind of recapitulation of the main event of Chapter 1, i.e., the creation of man. Here we are given much greater detail of the story of God's making of man.

Here, also, we are focusing upon other ideas that are introduced in the biblical text for the first time. For instance, it has been pointed out often that here the name of God appears in a different form than in Chapter 1. We have for the first time the great name of God that appears in so much of the rest of the Bible, *Jehovah Elohim* (or in the Hebrew, *Yahweh*), translated in our version, LORD God. There is a special reason for this change. In Chapter 1 we are dealing with the making of things, and God is presented to us under the name of *Elohim*, i.e., the Creator. But when man appears on the scene God appears also in a different character. He now appears under the title of *Jehovah*, which means essentially the covenant-making God, the God who keeps a promise. It is particularly significant that when God first reveals himself to this race of ours, it is as a God who intends to keep his promises.

In this section of Chapter 2 there are several fascinating references in a number of fields of human thought. But the supreme aim of the chapter is unquestionably theological. It is the desire of the writer here to bring us to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden, and thus to the testing of man. That is one of the most important revelations made known about our fallen race. But let us begin with a chronological note in Chapter 2:

**These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were crested.
In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens, when no plants of the field was get in the earth and no herb of the field had get sprung up -- for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground -- then the Lord God formed man ..." {Gen 2:4-7a RSV}**

You will notice the emphasis here is upon the time word, then. Undoubtedly this rendering of the Revised Standard Version is the most accurate translation of the Hebrew. It is somewhat different than the King James text, and may even create more problems, but it is certainly more true to the original text. The amazing thing is

that here we have the creation of man linked to the third day instead of the sixth. The verses describe the third day of creation when the land emerged from the seas and plant life began to appear.

We have already seen, in a previous series, that the third and sixth days of creation link together in a most unusual way. This present text lends credence to the theory of a recapitulation: days one, two, and three; then, in a strange and rather remarkable way which no one fully understands, days four, five, and six come in as linking with the first three days (days one and four; two and five; three and six). I point this out for your own intellectual challenge. I do not know quite what to make of it myself, but it certainly encourages us to view these accounts of creation in a different light than the conventional six-day approach.

It is also obvious that different conditions prevailed on earth in those early days than prevail now. There was no rain upon the earth, but a mist watered the ground. It is possible that this condition continued until the Flood so that it may be as some have suggested, that the rains that fell during the days of the Flood were the first rains to occur upon earth, though modern geology would suggest otherwise. At least it is clearly apparent that conditions have been greatly different in the distant past.

Now in Verse 7 we come to the second note struck, which is strongly anthropological, i.e., it has to deal with man. In one verse we have a most remarkable unfolding of the make-up of man.

then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [or literally, a living soul]. {Gen 2:7 RSV}

Here is a wonderfully condensed account of some tremendously significant things. I do not think we need to quibble over just how God formed the body of man. Did he pile dirt together, wet it with water to make a kind of a mud-statue, and then breathe life into it? No one knows. Certainly when we consider the miracle of conception and birth, when two tiny, almost invisible, cells meet together and begin to grow and divide under a rigid interlock of controls, developing at last into a human being such as we see ourselves to be, we need not ask about the ability of God to make man in his own remarkable way. Perhaps the event occurred along the line of the development of birth. I do not think we need to be concerned over some of the questions which people in the past have beat each other over the head with. Whether Adam had a navel or not is of little significance to me. What we are told here is that there are three divisions of man.

God first made the body of man and he made it of the dust of the earth. Certainly it is true that the same elements that are found in the dust of the ground are found also in the body of man. It is shown to be a fact because it is to dust that we return. You may recall the story of the little boy who came in some excitement to his mother and said, "Mother, is it true that we are made from the dust and that after we die we go back to the dust?" She said, "Yes, it is." "Well," he said, "I looked under my bed this morning, and there's someone either coming or going!"

We may not fully understand all that is involved in these pregnant sentences about the formation of man's body, but it is important to notice that though the body of man was evidently formed first, yet the text itself does not say, the body but it says God formed man of dust from the earth. I rather think that has significance. Man is more than a body. He is not merely an animated piece of beef steak, a hunk of meat with a nervous system. He is more than body; he is soul as well as body. The functions of the soul are wonderfully linked to those of the body in ways that we have not even begun to fathom.

For instance, the functions of the soul (largely, reason, emotion, and will), are also in some most remarkable way functions of our physical life. Reason is related to the brain, for it is only as the brain operates that reason occurs. Glands have great power over our emotional life. The hormones which they secrete directly affect us emotionally. Thus the functions of the soul are tied most remarkably to the body, and no one fully understands the mystery of it. In the forming of man God made body and soul together, with the capacities for function of the soul lying dormant within the body of man.

Then, into this body with an inactive soul, the account says he breathed, through the nostrils, a living spirit. The phrase, "breath of life," in the Hebrew, means "a spirit of life." The word for breath and spirit are the

same, both in Hebrew and in Greek, so that this is more than simply a picture of God breathing into man's nostrils. This is not face-to-face resuscitation: it is the impartation of a spirit into man. As we know from other Scriptures, the spirit is our essential nature. It is this that distinguishes man so remarkably from the animal creation. Thus as man comes into being, he comes full-orbed, as a threefold being, existing in body, soul, and spirit.

It is the joining together of spirit and body which activates and galvanizes the soul, so that it begins to function. Perhaps you can see something of the same principle in the operation of an electric light bulb. By itself a bulb is simply some wire and glass, rather commonplace, but with a remarkable potential. Add an invisible substance, electricity, and pass it through that visible wire, and a third function is born: light. Light is different from the wire, and different from the electricity, but comes streaming forth from that bulb. It is very much the same way with man. God made a body, with its possibilities of function as a soul, and breathed into it a spirit, and the union of body and spirit produced the activity of soul, as light is produced from the union of the wire and electricity.

When the spirit passes from the body, the life of the body ends. James tells us, "the body without the spirit is dead," {Jas 2:26 KJV}. We bury the body, and the spirit returns to God who made it, the Scriptures say. Whatever portion of the soul (or the life of man -- that part of us that has functioned within this time and space continuum) -- which has been saved, also returns with the spirit to God. I think it is most significant to note that in the Scriptures, it is the spirit which is regenerated but the soul is saved. There is only one place to my recollection, in which it ever mentions a spirit being saved. It is the soul, the life that we are living now, that needs to be saved. That part of it which is lived in the power of the Spirit of God, functioning in relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ as God intended man to live, is saved. Our souls are thus being saved as we live day by day in relationship to the Son of God. That "saved" soul is what we have left after this life, and only that. All else is wood, hay, and stubble, to disappear in the judging flame of God.

In fallen man the spirit that is given to man is dead. This is what the Scripture means when it says man is "dead in trespasses and sins," {Eph 2:1 KJV}. His spirit does not function as it should. Therefore the soul, which reflects like a mirror the activities of the spirit, reflects a dead and lifeless nature. This is what creates the intense, worldwide restlessness of our race, the inability to be satisfied, the unending search for answers that are never found. It is all an expression of a wasted spirit, lying ruined within us because of the fall of man. But in the beginning as Adam came perfect from the hand of God, he was a lamp -- and a lamp that was lit -- alive in ways beyond anything that we can conjecture.

The third note of this passage is geographical.

And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there. The name of the second river is Gihon; it is the one which flows around the whole land of Cush. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel, which flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. {Gen 2:8-14 RSV}

Here is the account of man placed in a garden. In passing I might point out that the name of the garden is never given to us. The name of it was not Eden; it was a garden placed in the land of Eden. The region in which the garden was found is called Eden, but the name of the garden itself is not given. There is no suggestion here that the whole earth was a garden, as sometimes we mistakenly conjecture. God marked off a certain division of it which he turned into a garden, and there he placed man. The task of man in that garden was to learn there the secrets that would enable him to turn the rest of the earth into a garden. But because man failed in the garden, he was unable to discover those secrets and, instead of turning the world into a garden, he is turning it into a garbage dump.

The proof that this account is no myth is that two of the rivers mentioned can still be identified. We have certain geographical landmarks given to us. Remember this account describes something that existed before the Flood had undoubtedly widely changed the surface of the earth. Yet, certain of these rivers can be identified. The Hiddekel River is the Tigris, and the Euphrates, of course, still bears that name. The other two rivers are perhaps identical with certain streams which still flow, one into the Black Sea and the other into the Caspian Sea, both arising out of the mountains of Ararat in Armenia, where the ark rested after the Flood.

There is an interesting reference here to the gold of the land. You who are familiar with Greek mythology know that the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece has its setting in this same area. It was to this part of the earth that Jason went in his search for the Golden Fleece. Thus the idea of gold has been associated with this land for a long time. The account is not myth but it is grounded in history, as is all of Scripture. We need not think of these accounts as mythological. They are symbolical, but they have roots solidly grounded in history.

The final and most important note is theological,

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die." {Gen 2:15-17 RSV}

We must now take a look at these trees in the midst of the garden and their fruit. Once it was the fashion to deride this whole account as being ridiculous. The idea of Adam and Eve partaking of an actual fruit that had an evil effect upon them has been ridiculed and derided for many years. Yet in these days of LSD and marijuana we should hardly expect such disdain to be exhibited any longer. Now we well know that there are drugs, chemical agents, such as are present in fruits and other plants, that can have this effect upon man. We know that LSD has a most powerful effect, not only upon the human mind, stimulating it in strange, mysterious ways, and even dangerous ways, but we know also that LSD and other drugs can even affect the chromosome structure of the body and pass along defects in heredity to children yet unborn. This is exactly the story of the garden of Eden.

How strange that in these days we are facing again the lure and attractiveness of psychedelic experiences, drawing young people just as Eve was drawn to this strange and mysterious fruit that hung before her in all its luring power, offering to do strange and wonderful things to her that would satisfy and fulfill her, but which, in the actual partaking, would destroy and injure and damage the whole race that would follow. We hardly need to struggle with the literalness of this account, in these days.

It is interesting that after this account in Genesis 2, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil disappears from Scripture. We do not find it mentioned after that, largely because its effects have become commonplace. But the tree of life reappears again in the book of Revelation. This tree seems to have had the power to convey immortality to man, and as such is used in Scripture as a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the book of Revelation the tree of life appears as a symbol of the person of Christ. Paul wrote to Timothy and said of Christ that he "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel," {2 Tim 1:18 RSV}. As we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, and are related to him, we experience that which was the capability of this tree of life in the garden of Eden, from which man was ultimately excluded. We will see more of that in Chapter 3.

But what is this "tree of the knowledge of good and evil"? That is the question that looms before us as we look at this chapter. After all, what is wrong with knowing good and evil? Surely it is a good thing to know the difference between good and evil. Many Scriptures encourage us to become mature enough to be able to distinguish between good and evil and one mark of immaturity in a Christian is that he cannot tell the difference. He is like a child, like a worldling, he does not know how to distinguish between good and evil. But, if it is a good thing to know the difference between good and evil, why did God forbid Adam to partake of this fruit?

We get a little more light if we look ahead to Chapter 3 where, in the story of the fall of man, we have in Verse 5 the words of the serpent to the woman. He said to her.

"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." {Gen 3:5 RSV}

Everything the devil says is not a lie. He uses truth, or, rather, misuses truth, in order to draw us on until we become the victims, ultimately, of his lie. But he baits his trap with truth, and here is the truth from the lips of the devil. "You will," he says, "have your eyes opened when you eat of this fruit, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." That suggests a clue as to what this fruit was and what it did. How does God know good and evil? Think about it for a moment and you will see that God knows evil, not by experience because he cannot experience evil, but he knows it by relating it to himself. That which is consistent with his character and his nature is good; that which is inconsistent with it is evil. That which is out of line, out of character with himself is evil, destructive, and dangerous; but all that is in line with his own nature is good. That is how God "knows" good and evil. He relates it to himself.

But God is the only one who can properly do that. God is the only Being in all the universe who has the right to relate all things to himself. When a creature tries it, he gets into trouble. The creatures of God's universe are made to discover the difference between good and evil by relating all to the Being of God, not to themselves. When man ate of the fruit he began to do what God does -- to relate everything to himself. Yet, as a creature, he has no real ability to maintain this kind of relationship and thus he is constantly interjecting an unbalanced element into life. When man began to think of himself as the center of the universe, he became like God. But it was all a lie. Man is not the center of the universe, and he cannot be.

But as you trace the course of human history you can see that this is the seductive lie that the serpent has whispered into the ears of men ever since: "You are the center of life. This is your world, everything relates to you. What you like is right; what you don't like is wrong. What you want to do is right; what you don't want to do, then don't let anyone make you do it. You are the center of things." You can find this idea throbbing and pulsating throughout the philosophies of men, that man stands at the center of things. That is the curse that fell upon man when he ate of the fruit in the garden of Eden. In a psychedelic way his mind was twisted, and he thought of himself as God, and related all things to himself. But when man does this he introduces an eccentric element into life, into creation. The problem with our unbalanced world today is that we have an earth filled with about four billion eccentrics. That is why everything is always going off in wrong directions.

But the glory of the gospel is that when men are redeemed, through faith in Jesus Christ, they resume once again a balanced life, and everything relates once again to God. God now becomes the center of things. Though we may struggle to learn this, eventually all the thrust and purpose of the gospel is here, to put God back into the center of his world and relate everything in our life and in the lives of others to him and not to us. It does not make any difference how things affect us. The important thing is, what do they do to God? What is his relationship to these things?

Let me illustrate that, in closing, with two stories I heard only yesterday. Doug and Winnie Deith, Conrad Hopkins and I were driving about Guatemala, visiting the old capital city, Antigua, with its lush tropical vegetation and its marvelous setting at the foot of three volcanoes. As we were going about the city they told me these two stories.

Some of you may remember Dick Jones, the son of Dr. Clarence Jones, Founder of HCJB. Dick and his wife and family were here in PBC for a while -- a wonderful young man with a great possibility of ministry for the Lord. You recall about two years ago he was killed in an automobile accident in Florida. Word came to us of his death and it brought great sadness to our hearts at the time. But Winnie Keith had been talking recently with the widow of Dick Jones, and she had told her the story of Dick's death. She was not with her husband when he was killed, but she came to the death scene and saw how the car was badly torn and mutilated in the accident. As the highway patrol examined the car they saw that the two men in the front seat, Dick Jones, who had been driving, and another man named Victor, had not fastened their seat belts. One of the investigators, an expert in this field, made the comment that if these men had fastened their seat belts, Victor would have been killed and Dick Jones would very likely have been spared.

Mrs. Jones said that when she realized that, the question came home to her heart, Why did this happen? Why

was it Dick that was chosen, why did he have to die? Then, as she watched the other man, Victor, in his ministry and saw how he was used and what a blessing he was to so many, even though she knew her husband was equally gifted, she faced this question and found that there was only one answer: God. It was God's choice, God's will. She said, "Who am I to tell him whom to choose? God has the right to make these decisions." Thus she related the most tragic event of her life to the central Being of history and found peace for a troubled heart.

The other story concerns Cameron Townsend, who is the founder of Wycliffe Bible Translators. He is a wonderful man -- in my judgment one of the most remarkable men of our day. Many of you know that Cameron Townsend began his work with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Guatemala 50 years ago. He came as a young man of 21 into the high mountains near Lake Atitlan and there began his translation work. From that simple beginning the worldwide ministry of Wycliffe Bible Translators has come. This year they had the 50th anniversary celebration in Guatemala and Cameron Townsend was there. He was highly honored by the government and people of Guatemala, and all of Central America. They had banquet after banquet in his name and he was given the highest honors of which those countries were capable of bestowing. Everywhere he went he was feted and honored and his work exalted.

But Winnie Keith said that, typically, Dr. Townsend turned every occasion into an opportunity to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ and of his work everywhere he went. Refusing the honor for himself, he related it to the One to whom it belonged. He put God back into the center of things and maintained the balance of life. Those of you who know him will be interested, as I was, to learn that, at 71 years of age, he is now studying Russian because he heard that there are several dialects in Russia that are not yet translated.

This is what the Scripture means when it says that all of life must be built around the Person of the Lord Jesus in order to make sense. There is coming a day when every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Then the destruction, desolation, and heartache of the garden of Eden will be reversed, and men shall once again acknowledge the centrality of God in life. Then the world shall be filled with glory and righteousness from the river to the ends of the earth. Everything shall be what God intended it to be.

But the glory of the gospel is that this can happen in human hearts right now. This is what the gospel message is all about. Have you ceased your rebellion against the will of God? Have you stopped trying to be a little god, trying to run things in your own home or office the way you want them to be? Have you crowned Jesus Christ Lord of his empire, where he belongs, and invited him with gladness to sit upon the throne of your heart and rule there? Have you stopped your grumbling and complaining about all the things that come into your life, that are his choice for you, and begun to rejoice as the Scriptures exhort us, "...giving thanks in all things, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" {cf, 1 Th 5:18}?

Prayer:

How we need, our Father, this exhortation to remind us of the one great theme of life -- that life can not, will not ever make sense, will not cease its endless friction, until it be related to the Person of Jesus Christ our Lord. Grant that every heart here, young and old alike, boy and girl, man and woman, may each in his own way on this first Sunday of 1968, crown him anew Lord of Lords, King of Kings, and mean it -- to live each day in that holy relationship. We ask in his name, Amen.

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