

Natures Separate and Distinct



“And God saw every thing that he had made,
and, behold, *it was very good....*” (Genesis 1:31)

NATURES SEPARATE AND DISTINCT

The failure to understand rightly what constitutes a perfect man, the misapprehension of the terms “mortal” and “immortal,” and wrong ideas of justice have together tended to error and mystified many Scriptures otherwise easily understood. The common view, though unsupported by a single text of Scripture, is that a perfect man has never been on earth, that man is only partially developed, and that in order to reach perfection, man must become a spirit being. This view makes confusion of the Scriptures instead of developing the harmony and beauty that result from “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).

The Scriptures teach that there have been two—and only two—perfect men: Adam and Jesus. Adam was created in the image of God—that is, with similar *mental* powers of reason, memory, judgment, and will and with similar *moral* qualities of justice, benevolence, and love—but “of the earth, earthy” (Gen. 1:27; 1 Cor. 15:47). As an earthly image of a spirit being, man

possesses qualities of the *same kind*, but those qualities differ widely in *degree, range, and scope*.

To such an extent is man an image of God that God can say even to fallen man, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18). As Jehovah is ruler over all things in the universe, so man was made a ruler over all things on earth. God said of mankind, “Let them have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:26). When God made Adam, He completed the physical creative work and pronounced His creature “very good,” that is, “perfect,” for in God’s sight, nothing short of perfection would be “very good” in His intelligent creatures (Gen. 1:31).

The perfection of man as created is expressed in the Eighth Psalm, as follows:

“For thou [God] hast made him [man] a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

“Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

“All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

**“The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.”
(Psa. 8:5-8).**

Here the Psalmist David refers to man in his original estate and prophetically intimates that God has not abandoned His original plan to have man in His own image and as king of the earth—that God will remember, redeem, and restore man to the same condition. The Apostle Paul also calls attention to the fact that God’s original purpose has not been abandoned—that man, originally grand and perfect as king of the earth, is to be remembered, visited, and restored. Paul then adds that we do not yet see this promised restitution, but we do see the first step of God toward its accomplishment. “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with [the] glory and honour [of perfect manhood]; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man [as a fitting ransom or substitute for Adam]” (Heb. 2:7-9). Thus the way has been prepared for the restitution of man to all that was lost through Adam’s disobedience.

Rotherham, one of the most scrupulous translators, renders Psalm 8:4-6 as follows:

“What was weak man, that thou shouldst make mention of him? or the son of the earthborn, that thou shouldst set him in charge?

“That thou shouldst make him little less than messengers of God, with glory and honour, shouldst crown him?

“Shouldst give him dominion over the works of thy hands,— All things, shouldst have put under his feet.”

It is important to realize that a little lower in degree does not mean a little less perfect. A creature may be perfect yet on a lower plane of being than another. Thus a perfect horse is lower than a perfect man. The various natures, animate and inanimate, are presented below in categories of descending order:

1. *Grades of Heavenly or Spirit Beings.* At the top of this list is the divine nature (God’s nature), and at the bottom is angelic nature, the lowest of the spirit forms. In between are various spirit orders. To state the matter another way, the grades of spirit being, although perfect, stand related to each other as higher or

lower in nature or kind. The divine nature is the highest, being superior to all other spirit natures.

2. *Grades of Earthly or Animal Beings.* The human being, man, is at the top of this list and is followed, in descending order, by brute beasts, fowl, and fish.

3. *Grades in the Vegetable Domain.* There are also various grades of order in the vegetable domain: trees, shrubs, grasses, and finally mosses.

4. *Grades in the Mineral Domain.* In the mineral kingdom, gold is at the top, followed by silver, copper, and iron.

The following table summarizes the various natures, animate and inanimate:

Grades of Heavenly or Spirit Beings	Grades of Earthly or Animal Beings	Grades in the Vegetable Domain	Grades in the Mineral Domain
Divine — — Angelic	Human Brute Fowl Fish	Trees Shrubs Grasses Mosses	Gold Silver Copper Iron

Any being or element in each of the various categories can be perfect, yet it differs in rank from the others in its respective category. For example, even though each of the minerals that are mentioned may be pure, gold ranks the highest. Similarly, although each order of plant should be brought to perfection, the various orders would still differ in nature and rank. It is likewise with the animals. If each species should be brought to perfection, there would still be variety, for perfecting a nature does not change a nature.

The word “nature” is sometimes used in an accommodated sense. For instance, a dog may be said to have a savage nature, or a horse may have a gentle nature. But using the word in this way signifies merely the disposition of the one described as compared with others and does not, strictly speaking, relate to “nature” as understood in the Scriptural sense.

While the classes or natures that are named are distinct and separate, they may be compared with each other. The highest grade of mineral is a little lower than the lowest grade of vegetable. Why? Because in vegetation, there is life. And so the highest grade of vegetable is a little lower than the lowest grade

of animal life. Why? Because animals, even in their lowest forms, have enough intelligence to be conscious of existence. In like manner, man, though the highest of the animal or earthly beings, is a little lower than the angels because angels are spirit or heavenly beings.

Of course there is a wide contrast between man as we now see him, degraded by sin, and the perfect man God created in His image. Sin gradually changed man's features as well as his character. Multiple generations of ignorance, licentiousness, and general depravity have so blurred and marred humanity that in the large majority of the race, the likeness of God is almost obliterated. Moral and intellectual qualities are dwarfed, and animal instincts are unduly developed, being no longer balanced by the higher qualities. Man has lost physical strength to such an extent that even with all the aid of medical science, his average length of life is now approximately only 75 years, whereas Adam survived 930 years under the same death penalty (Gen. 5:5). But though thus defiled and degraded by sin and death, man is to be restored to his original perfection of mind and body and to glory, honor, and dominion during the millennial reign of Christ (Acts 3:20,21). The things to be restored by and through Christ are those

things that were lost through Adam's transgression. Man did not lose a heavenly paradise but an *earthly* one. Under the death penalty, Adam did not lose a spirit but a *human* existence. All that was lost was purchased back by his Redeemer, who declared that he came to seek and "to save that which was lost" (Matt. 18:11).

In addition to the foregoing, there are other Scriptural proofs that the perfect man is not a spirit being. We are told that before our Lord left his glory to become a man, he was in a "form of God," that is, a *spirit* form, a *spirit being* (Phil. 2:6-8). However, to be a *ransom* for mankind, Jesus himself had to be a man; that is, he had to be of the same nature as the sinner (Adam) whose substitute in death he was to become (1 Tim. 2:5,6). Therefore, it was necessary that his nature be changed. Paul tells us that Jesus "took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Heb. 2:16). In other words, Jesus did not come down *one* step lower than his own nature to become an angel, but he came down *two* steps lower to become a human being, a man. He was made *flesh*. Not only is angelic nature not the only order of spirit being, but also it is a little lower than the order of our Lord before he became a man. Of course in his preexistence, Jesus did not have as high a nature as he does now because God has

highly exalted him for his obedience in becoming man's willing ransom (Phil. 2:8,9). Jesus is now of the *highest* order of spirit being: a partaker of the *divine* (that is, Jehovah's) nature.

Thus we find proof not only that the divine, angelic, and human natures are separate and distinct but also that to be a perfect man is not to be an angel—just as to have perfect angelic nature does not imply that angels are divine or equal with Jehovah. Jesus “took not ... the nature of angels” but a different nature, the nature of man—and not the imperfect human nature as we possess it at present but the *perfect* human nature. He became a man, not a depraved and nearly dead being such as people are now but a man in the full vigor of perfection. Jesus had to be a *perfect* man in order to keep the *perfect* Law, which is the full measure of a *perfect* man's ability (Eph. 4:13). Moreover, Jesus had to be a *perfect* man in order for him to pay the ransom or corresponding price for the forfeited life of the *perfect* man Adam. “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead” (1 Cor. 15:21). Had Jesus been imperfect to the least degree, he would have been under condemnation and, therefore, could not have been an acceptable sacrifice. Neither could he have obeyed perfectly the will of God. A *perfect* man (Adam) was

tried, he failed, and he was condemned; only a *perfect* man could give the corresponding price as the Redeemer.

Now the question is squarely before us in another form: If, as the Scriptures show, Jesus in the flesh was a perfect man, do they not also show that a perfect man is a *human*, fleshly being, and not an angel but *lower* than the angels? The logical conclusion is unmistakable, and in addition, we have the inspired statement of the Eighth Psalm and the Apostle Paul's reference to it, already cited.

Nor was Jesus a *combination* of two natures, that is, human and spirit. The blending of two natures produces neither the one nature nor the other, and it is imperfect, being a *hybrid*, which is obnoxious in the divine arrangement. When Jesus was in the flesh, he was a perfect *human being*. Previous to that, he was a perfect *spirit being*. And since his resurrection, he is a perfect *spirit being* but of the highest or *divine* order. It was not until the time of his consecration unto death, typified in his baptism in the river Jordan at age 30—the age of manhood according to Jewish Law and, therefore, the right time to consecrate himself as a man—that he received the “earnest” of his inheritance of the divine nature

(Eph. 1:13,14). The human nature had to be consecrated to death before he could receive even the *pledge* of the divine nature. And then his consecration had to be carried out with the sacrifice of his human nature unto death on the Cross before he could become a *full partaker* of the divine nature. After becoming a man, he was obedient unto death, “wherefore God also hath highly exalted him” to the divine nature (Phil. 2:9). This Scripture is telling us that Jesus was not exalted to the divine nature until the human nature was actually sacrificed—was *dead*.

Thus we see that there was no mixture of natures in Jesus but that twice he experienced a *change of nature*: first, from spirit to human, and afterward, from human to the highest order of spirit nature, the divine nature. In each case, the one nature was given up for the other. In this grand example of perfect humanity, which stood unblemished before the world until sacrificed for the world’s redemption, we see the perfection from which the human race fell in Adam and to which it is to be restored. In becoming man’s ransom, our Lord Jesus gave the equivalent for that which man lost. Therefore, all mankind may receive again, through faith in Christ and obedience to his requirements, not a spirit nature but a glorious, perfect *human* nature, namely, that which was lost.

In the ages to come beyond the Kingdom, for which we pray, the perfect faculties and powers of the perfect human being will be exercised indefinitely upon new and varied objects of interest and knowledge with vastly increased skills, but no such increase of knowledge or power will effect a change of nature or make it even more perfect (Matt. 6:10). Man will only be expanding and developing the perfect power that already exists. The increase of knowledge and skill will doubtless be man's blessed privilege throughout all eternity, yet he will still be a man. He will be merely learning to use more fully the powers of the human nature already possessed. Beyond those wide limits he cannot hope to advance, nor will he desire to do so, for his desires will be limited to the scope of his powers.

While Jesus as a man was an illustration of perfect human nature, to which the mass of mankind will be restored, he has been, since his resurrection, an illustration of the glorious divine nature, which the overcoming Church will share with him at their resurrection (2 Pet. 1:4). Because the present age is devoted mainly to the development of the Church class, who are offered a *change of nature*, and because the apostolic epistles are instruction for this "little flock," we should not, on the one hand, conclude

that God's plans will end with the completion of this chosen company (Luke 12:32). Nor, on the other hand, should we go to the opposite extreme and suppose that the special promises of the divine nature—spirit bodies, etc.—made to the Christian in the present age are God's design for mankind. To the Christian are the *exceeding great* and precious promises given *over and above* the other precious promises that are made to mankind. To rightly divide the Word of truth, we should observe that the Scriptures recognize as *two separate* things the perfection of the divine nature in the Little Flock and the perfection of the human nature in the restored world of mankind (2 Tim. 2:15).

Let us inquire more particularly: What are spirit beings? What powers are theirs? By what laws are they governed? Because many do not understand the nature of a spirit being, they think it must be a mere myth, and much superstition prevails on this subject. The Apostle Paul did not have such an idea, for he intimates that a human being is incapable of understanding the higher spirit nature. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). As if to guard against any mythical or superstitious notion, Paul

plainly states that there is a spirit body as well as a natural human body, a celestial body as well as a terrestrial body, and the glory of the heavenly as well as the glory of the earthly. “There are also celestial [heavenly] bodies, and bodies terrestrial [earthly]: but the glory of the celestial is one [kind of glory], and the glory of the terrestrial is another [and a different kind of glory]” (1 Cor. 15:40). The glory of the earthly, lost by Adam’s transgression, is to be restored to the human race by the Lord Jesus and his Bride—by The Christ, Head and body—in the next age, that is, during the millennial reign of Christ’s Kingdom.

The glory of the heavenly is as yet unseen except as it is revealed to us by the eye of faith by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. The glories of the heavenly and the earthly are distinct and separate. Although we know to some extent what the natural, earthly, terrestrial body is because we now have such, we can only estimate the glory of its perfection. It is flesh, blood, and bones, and since there are two distinct kinds of bodies, we know that the spirit body, whatever it may be, is not composed of flesh, blood, and bones but is heavenly, celestial. As Jesus said to Nicodemus, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6). But what a spirit

body is, we know not in the present life. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it *doth not yet appear* what we shall be: but we know that, when he [Jesus] shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

With the exception of Jesus, we have no record of any being, either spirit or human, ever having been changed from one nature to another nature, and his was an exceptional case for an exceptional purpose. When God made angels, He intended that they should *remain* angels *forever*. And so it is with man. Each was made perfect on his own plane of being. As in the inanimate creation, there is a pleasing and almost endless variety, so in the living and the intelligent creation, the same variety in perfection is possible. And every creature in perfection is glorious.

Uncertain and wrong ideas about the meaning of the terms “mortality” and “immortality” have beclouded this subject. *Mortality* signifies a state or condition of *liability to death*—not a condition of death but a condition in which *death is a possibility*. *Immortality* signifies a state or condition *not liable to death*—not merely a condition of freedom from death but a condition in which *death is an impossibility*. The common but erroneous idea of

mortality is a state or condition in which death is unavoidable, while the prevailing concept of immortality is a little more nearly correct. The word “immortal” means “not mortal,” and hence the very construction of the words indicates their true definitions.

Because of the prevailing wrong concept of the word “mortal,” many are confused when trying to determine whether Adam was mortal or immortal before his transgression. On the one hand, they reason that if he had been immortal, God would not have said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” for it is impossible for an immortal being to die (Gen. 2:17). This is a logical conclusion. On the other hand, they say that if Adam had been mortal, wherein could have consisted the threat or penalty in the statement “thou shalt surely die,” since, if already mortal according to their erroneous definition, he could not have avoided death anyway?

The difficulty, it can be perceived, lies in the false meaning given to the word “mortality.” When the correct definition is applied, all is clear. Adam was mortal, that is, in a condition in which death was a possibility. He had life in full and perfect measure yet not *inherent* (immortal) life. Adam’s life was a life

sustained by every tree of the garden except the one kind of tree that was forbidden (Gen. 2:16,17). As long as Adam continued in obedience to and in harmony with his Maker, his life was secure. The sustaining elements would not be denied. Thus seen, Adam had life, and death was entirely avoidable, yet he was in such a condition that death was possible; that is, he was mortal.

The question arises, then, If Adam was mortal and on trial, was he on trial for immortality? The general answer would be “yes,” but we say “no.” His trial was to see whether he was worthy or unworthy of a *continuance* of the life and the blessings *already possessed*. It was nowhere promised that if he were obedient, he would become an immortal being. Therefore, we are bound to avoid all such speculations. Adam was promised a continuance of the blessings then enjoyed, so long as obedient, and threatened with the loss of all — death — if disobedient.

The false idea of the meaning of the word “mortal” leads people to conclude that all beings who do not die are immortal and that this class includes the Heavenly Father, Jesus, the angels, and all mankind, but the great mass of mankind saved from the fall in the next age, as well as the angels, will always be mortal.

Though in a condition of perfection and bliss, they will always be of that mortal nature and thus could suffer death (the “wages of sin”) if they commit sin (Rom. 6:23). The security of their existence will be conditioned, as it was with Father Adam, upon obedience to the all-wise God.