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# *Covenant Reformed News*

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## **The Book of Job and the Nature of Man (2)**

Last time, we considered the book of Job's teaching on man's nature as to his constitution or "parts," body and soul or spirit, noting that it echoes Genesis 2-3 (2:7; 3:19). There is a reason why Job and his friends speak so frequently of man's body and spirit. Job is experiencing intense suffering in body and soul, and death appears near, bringing man's dissolution into his two constituent "aspects" (4:19-20; 10:9; 34:14-15).

The book of Job contains valuable instruction not only on the constitutional nature of man but also on his moral nature, now that he is fallen. "How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?" (15:16). Job himself was a believer in, and worshipper of, the one true and living God (1:1), indeed Jehovah Himself twice declares to Satan that Job was an exemplary saint: "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?" (1:8; 2:3). But no man can be spotless in the eyes of the most holy God: "Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?" (25:5-6). After his great trial, Job confesses, "Behold, I am vile ... Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (40:4; 42:6).

It is highly significant that the book of Job repeatedly speaks of sin as being conveyed to us by means of human generation. Bildad asks, "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (25:4). Eliphaz raises the same rhetorical question: "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?" (15:14). After Job's sombre evaluation of humanity, "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble" (14:1), he asks and answers his own question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one" (14:4).

Though Bildad and Eliphaz (and their companion Zophar) differed from Job in that they reckoned that Job's calamities were God's judgment upon him for some great sin, all the parties were agreed not only on man's wickedness but also that man's depravity is passed on to him through conception. "Born of a woman"—the same Hebrew words are used in each instance (14:1; 15:14; 25:4)—declare Job, Eliphaz and Bildad unitedly in explanation of man's sinfulness—both as to its origin (right at the start of each life) and its means of conveyance (human generation).

Zophar states that man was “placed upon earth” by God (20:4); this includes every human being and the first man. Job refers to Adam’s covering or hiding his sin, alluding to Genesis 3:8 and/or Genesis 3:12: “If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom ...” (Job 31:33; cf. Hos. 6:7).

All of us are sinners through being “born of a woman” and this holds for our parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and so on. Indeed, this goes all the way back to the children born to Adam and Eve. *Belgic Confession* 15 summarizes biblical teaching: “We believe that, through the disobedience of Adam, original sin is extended to all mankind; which is a corruption of the whole nature and an hereditary disease, wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother’s womb, and which produceth in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof, and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind.”

This great truth of original sin is especially taught by the apostle Paul in Romans 5:12-21, the *locus classicus*, i.e., standard or classic place, on this subject. By Paul’s day, the Messiah had come and died on the cross for the sins of all His people, He had sent forth His Holy Spirit and was gathering His catholic or universal church from all nations. Thus Paul was able to contrast Adam’s sin, offence and disobedience bringing death, judgment and condemnation upon those in him to Christ’s perfect obedience bringing justification, righteousness and life to those in Him. The wonder of God’s gracious gift to us is that the Lord Jesus, “the last Adam” (I Cor. 15:45), is our covenant head and representative, and not the first Adam. Thus the Lord’s righteousness is imputed or reckoned to us and not our actual sins or our original sin in Adam.

But why does the book of Job repeatedly refer to man’s original or birth sin? In general, it explains the source of man’s grief (14:1-4) and provides the judicial ground for God’s inflicting misery upon man. In particular, man’s original sin is brought up by Job and his three friends, though with different purposes, in connection with Job’s terrible sufferings and wretched condition.

One could also add that Job is best understood as living around the days of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was not that far historically from the fall recorded in Genesis 3. Moreover, in the great debate in the book of Job, none of the parties could draw upon the history of Israel for their arguments, for that nation had not yet been formed. But they could and did appeal, for example, to the truth concerning God (His power, majesty and justice) and man (his creation, sinfulness and mortality), and they drew lessons from the Most High’s creation of all things, His providential government of the universe and His dealings with man.

We should bear these things in mind when reading the powerful and moving book of Job. These issues are especially important to us when we suffer loss and bodily pain, when we are wrongly accused by misguided friends or when we struggle with God’s way with us. How much we need “the patience of Job” and the grace to understand, despite all appearances to the contrary, that “the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” towards us, His weak and sinful people (James 5:11)! *Rev. Stewart*

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For more on the doctrine of man, check out “God’s Providence and Man’s Creation, Fall and Inability to Do Good” (*Belgic Confession Class*, Vol. VI: Articles 13-14), which explains our constitutional and moral nature, as created and fallen beings, and the consolation of our Father’s providential care of us. This attractive box set of 10 CDs is available from the CPRC for just £10 (inc. P&P).

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## **The Son of Man**

A brother in Brazil asks, “What was the idea behind the affirmation or presentation of Jesus of Himself as the Son of Man?”

Our Lord Jesus often called Himself by the name, Son of Man. One sometimes receives the impression that Christ preferred this name. This impression is especially gained from the gospel according to Luke, for the Lord’s use of this name for Himself appears most frequently in the third gospel account.

The same name is frequently ascribed to the prophet Ezekiel when the Lord gave him the prophecies he was to speak to the people in captivity. See, for example, verse 2 of chapters 33, 34, 35 and 38. But as a name solely for our Lord Jesus Christ, it appears first in Daniel 7:13-14: “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

This vision Daniel received is a vision of the exaltation, or, what we may call, the coronation, of our Lord Jesus Christ. That it appears in the Old Testament is surprising, yet, it appears as prophecy, for the main thesis of Daniel’s prophecy is the development of the Antichrist and what the Antichrist means for the church. It is fitting, therefore, that this vision of Christ’s coronation should appear as a contrast to Antichrist and as a prophecy of Christ’s victory over Antichrist and all the powers of darkness. In this the people of God may find comfort in the terrible days when Antichrist rules.

It is evident from the passage in Daniel that the name Son of Man is, first and foremost, a name that belongs to Christ. Its significance in the New Testament is that our Lord Jesus Christ, fully divine, is also so closely associated with us that He is also a son of man. His genealogy as recorded in Luke goes all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38)—as our genealogy does. He was born of Mary and was truly a part of our human race. He was like us in all things, except for sin.

This “likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3) is also important. Christ’s human nature was not strong, indescribably robust, immune to all weakness and sickness, as was Adam’s nature prior to his fall. Our Lord came in the likeness of our human nature as we now possess it: weak and frail, limited in power and subject to increasing weakness with the passing of the years, subject to every disease and malfunction of any part of it. That is the human nature He took on.

We do not read that the Lord was ill, but whether He was or not, He could have caught influenza or pneumonia. In His weak human nature, He was sometimes very hungry, sometimes very thirsty and sometimes very, very tired—as when He slept soundly in a boat in danger of sinking because of towering waves and powerful winds (Matt 8:23-27).

In the ancient church, a heresy arose that denied Christ's weakened human nature. This heresy (Apollinarianism) denied that Christ had, as we do, a rational soul. In place of a rational soul, it was claimed, the divine Logos functioned. The church did not want that heresy, because, as the church father, Athanasius, said, "We need to be saved in body and soul and, therefore, our Lord who came to save us had to have a human body and a human soul."

Many of the Anabaptists at the time of the Reformation also denied that Christ was like us in all things. They claimed that our Lord, though born of the virgin Mary, did not actually possess a human nature that came from her; God created Christ's human nature in the womb of Mary. The *Belgic Confession* repudiates that idea in Article 18. The section is worth quoting: "Therefore we confess (in opposition to the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh of His mother) that Christ is become a partaker of the flesh and blood of the children; that He is a fruit of the loins of David after the flesh; made of the seed of David according to the flesh; a fruit of the womb of the Virgin Mary; made of a woman; a branch of David; a shoot of the root of Jesse; sprung from the tribe of Judah; descended from the Jews according to the flesh; of the seed of Abraham, since He took on Him the seed of Abraham, and became like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted; so that in truth He is our Immanuel, that is to say, God with us."

Our salvation depends on Christ's likeness to us in all things. The *Heidelberg Catechism* underscores this truth in Q. & A. 16: "Why must He be very man, and also perfectly righteous? Because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which hath sinned should likewise make satisfaction of sin; and one who is himself a sinner cannot satisfy for others."

In our day of apostasy, the churches who deny the divinity of Christ are increasing in number; but the fact remains that the doctrine of Christ's full and complete humanity is also extremely important. Not only did Christ have to be like us in all things, except sin, to save us, but salvation comes to us because we are united to His blessed body by a true and living faith. Today, our wonderful Saviour is exalted in the highest heavens and resplendent in majesty as King of kings and Lord over all things. Now, in a glorious hope, we confess that we shall, some day, in body and soul, be like Him in all His glory (Phil. 3:21), for He became like us so that we might become like Him (II Cor. 8:9).

One more point: Our Lord's apparent preference for the name Son of Man speaks of His willingness and desire to be identified with us. Can we ever fathom such humility? Such love? How vile we are! Yet our Lord, in boundless love for us, identifies Himself with us and becomes like us! Glorious truth! *Prof. Hanko*

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### **Covenant Protestant Reformed Church**

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