

Man's Nature: One's Invisible Metaphysical Imprint and the Bible

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More Than Physical

While our bodies are physical and we live in a material environment, some things are beyond the physical. Indeed, the “*stuff*” that actually makes our physical body - alive - will probably forever evade the grasp of the materialistic scientist, and may finally be ... metaphysical. So, continue the search ... but it may prove a vain one. God, “*the Lord ... makes alive*” (1Sam 2:6) and He “*Himself gives to all life*” (Acts 17:25). Life, most likely, will be eternally known to us as an incalculably valuable, beyond empirical dissection, continually miraculous ... metaphysical gift. But, that is not all. Inside this metaphysically animated body resides “*the elements*” that make up our personhood. Our abilities, aptitudes - indeed our personality - may also finally, and forever, be metaphysical attributes.

At one time, philosophers forwarded the concept of, “*tabula rasa*” - we are born a blank state and are then molded by our environment. This has been broadly abandoned, as an absolute, as it is now recognized that some degree of preprogramming exists in each person. Environment then serves to enhance - or injure - one's predispositions. I think of this preprogrammed “*package*” as one's “*metaphysical imprint.*” It is a package of **potentials** that unfold as life unfolds. Environmental opportunities are granted (or denied) for development of said traits.

Positive Elements: Aptitudes and Talents

Why can one person receive the best training, unlimited opportunity, and all the tools necessary to master some endeavor - and never be any good - and yet one “*born on the wrong side of the tracks,*” with minimal training, can excel in that same undertaking? We instinctively call such a one, “*a natural*” - and rightly so. People are gifted ... or not. Every aptitude will ultimately be traced back to God as its Author. At the Final Judgment, that will be the basis upon which He will require an accounting for how such aptitudes were employed.

One's abilities can be used for good or bad. Since it is God who creates and then distributes these gifts, He alone decides if the use has been good or bad. The primary demarcation is if one's abilities were employed in honoring the God of the Bible, and promoting His agenda ... or not. Musical abilities are an example. So also, business prowess. Organizational and leadership abilities are a couple more. Writing is yet another. There are multitudes of natural talents that can be used either way. Additionally, some people are granted more talents than others (Mt 25:14-30 - and you think this is only about money?). “*He who is not with Me is against Me; and He who does not gather with Me scatters*” (Lk 11:23). Our objections to such narrowness ... will not prevail.

But, There's More!

When one is born again, spiritual gifts are disbursed. These are **additional** grants beyond that first imprint. The Spirit distributes “*to each one individually as He wills*” (1Cor 12:11). These are either used positively - or are neglected. Obviously, God wants them used. They cannot be used negatively like natural giftings can be. That is an oxymoron. By the way, one's

natural giftings may very well be “*cleaned up*” and employed by God in His Kingdom expansion. But, this must be carefully worked out before the individual and God - as one seeks Him on His desires for one’s work and witness. My music testimony, in the Article, “*The Founder’s Music Testimony*” is as an example of such a process.

Negative Elements: The Sin Problem

There are two basic elements to man’s sin problem. The first is an inherited sin nature. This has bents, or inclinations, toward errant behavior. The second problem involves areas of moral weakness - absent any bent toward that errant behavior. This should really be understood as some area of moral **vulnerability** - not a character flaw. Neither of these accrue any personal guilt before God. Only the commission of the errant behavior creates guilt.

The Sin Nature

Adam, the first man, was created without a sin nature. He was created in God’s “*image*” and “*likeness*” (Gen 1:26). But after he sinned, we find this subtle statement at the birth of his son, Seth: “*(Adam) became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image ...*” (Gen 5:3). Seth entered this world in Adam’s “*likeness*” and “*image*” - not God’s. Unfortunately, this new inheritance did not end with Seth. We enter this world “*in Adam*” (1Cor 15:22). One result? “*For the inclination of man’s heart is evil from his youth*” (Gen 8:21). Each of us are born with at least **one** sin-bent ... probably several ... maybe many.

No one inherits every possible sin inclination. Some cannot co-exist in the same person. For example, one cannot be a sluggard who “*works around work,*” - with the life goal of a recliner in front of a television set - and also be one who “*loves to be first,*” ambitiously striving for “*chief seats*” in some synagogue ... or its equivalent (2Thes 3:11, 3Jn 9 and Mk 12:39). Paul said that “*death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam’s offense*” (Ro 5:12-15). Cain, Lamech, Balaam and all the rest, sinned differently than Adam ... attracted by different “*forbidden fruits.*” Not all sin natures are created equal.

Moral Weaknesses

In addition to these bents, each person also has areas of moral weakness. Jesus, who did not have a sin nature, was “*tempted in all ways just as we are, yet without sin*” (Heb 4:15). The phrase, “*just as we are*” is “*kath homoiotata*” - “*according to similarity.*” We are tempted ... even in areas where we possess no bent. I think of this as a “*weak spot,*” or “*soft spot,*” that is subject to some moral challenge. These vulnerabilities may have more to do with the struggle **to obey God’s revealed will** in a given situation - as opposed to the outright seeking of some prohibited activity that “*an inclination*” would stimulate. I examine some of Jesus’ temptations (and the dynamics as asserted in the previous statement) in, “*The Nature of Jesus’ Temptations and the Bible.*” I think you will find this of great interest.

Temptation

James tells us “*each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth*

death” (Ja 1:14,15). While temptation often plays off one’s particular sin inclinations, that is not always the case. Adam lusted - without a sin nature - and then sinned. He desired more than God’s legitimate allotment for him. Though Eve was deceived into sin, Adam was not. *“It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman, being quite deceived, fell into transgression”* (1Tim 2:14). Adam rebelled. In fact, he was present when Eve was being duped, allowed her to eat of that forbidden fruit, and when she didn’t die (physically), then he partook. He let Eve ... be the guinea pig. Just another one of the animals I guess. Real nice guy. The fallen angels were also created without sin - and then chose it. All these angels (and Adam too) were created innocent ... but possessed at least **one** area of moral weakness ... probably several ... maybe many. Weak spots were attacked, evil was chosen, and falls occurred. And just as inclinations toward sin are individualized bents, so also are the areas of moral weakness. Where one person may possess a particular weakness, another may not. For example, there is no evidence Eve ... wanted to use Adam as a guinea pig that day. You know, after losing their nice home, and after Eve had some time to review and replay that entire episode ... I wonder how their relationship blossomed?

“The Lord ... forms the spirit of man within him” (Zch 12:1).

Just as God physically molds each one as He so desires (Ex 4:10,11), He also assembles each one’s metaphysical imprint, with the varied elements, as **He** so chooses. David stated, *“For Thou didst form my inward parts; Thou didst weave me in my mother’s womb ...”* (Ps 139:13). To limit this verse to physical attributes only - is to limit this verse. This invisible metaphysical imprint is as unique to each person - as is one’s DNA combination or personal fingerprints. None are created equal. *“For just as you do not know the path of the wind and how the spirit enters the bones in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things”* (Eccl 11:5).

God has His own purposes behind this *“activity”* - but, the day will be welcomed when all my bents and weak spots are forever expunged ... leaving just positive parts. This is a great part of the Christian hope and expectation. May it be yours as well. *“Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Ro 7:24,25).

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