

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE WHETHER
ONE HOLDS TO A DICHOTOMOUS OR A TRICHOTOMOUS VIEW OF MAN'S NATURE?

1. On the one hand it may make little or no difference; on the other hand it may reflect important differences in exegesis or hermeneutics or theological methodology.

a. For example, it may reflect adoption of the principle that words are points rather than areas of meaning that sometimes overlap the areas of meaning of other words.

b. For example, it may reflect adoption of the principle that different words are always used to intend different meanings, rather than the principle that different words are sometimes used to intend synonymous meanings.

c. For example, it may reflect adoption of the principle that different words always refer to different things, rather than the principle that different words sometimes refer to the same things.

For instance, in the use of names the same person or thing is often referred to by different names. Thus the President of the United States is referred to as the "Chief Executive," the Commander in Chief," the "man in the White House," the "leader of our nation," the "man in the oval office," and "Mr. President." Some of these names merely look at him from different aspects, and some emphasize different functions and/or relationships. Yet they all refer to the same person.

d. For example, it may reflect whether we approach the meanings of words in Scripture via the constructions and convictions of a particular Biblical scholar or a theologian or a theological system, rather than view an inductive study of its uses in context.

2. On the one hand it may make little or no difference; on the other hand it may seriously color our view of human psychology, and through it our understanding of Scripture.

a. For example, if we treat the soul and spirit as a functional unity, there is no problem; but if we treat the soul and spirit as distinct entities that function separately or even independently of each other, some important implications can arise, such that a human being's intellect, emotions, will, and consciousness can each be viewed as functioning on two levels—the carnal or soulish level and the spiritual level—and each human being can be seen to have two psychological centers or two totally distinct "natures." Thus a Christian could be said to think or feel or will with the soul and not the spirit, or with the spirit and not the soul.

b. In the realm of sanctification and the Christian life, for example, the viewing of soul and spirit as separately functioning entities can lead a person to think that he or she can function exclusively in the spirit entity rather than in both entities, and thus attain sinlessness in this