



Theology in a nutshell

HUMANITY

By Ken Horn

Editor's note: This ninth article in the series "Theology in a nutshell" is on theological anthropology, the study of man.

"Man — God's work at the end of the week when He was tired."
— Mark Twain

Man, or humankind, is certainly flawed and frail. But the picture is not quite as bad as Mark Twain made it out to be. Man is God's supreme creation and is the "apple of His eye" (Deuteronomy 32:10; Psalm 17:8; Zechariah 2:8).

What is man?

The Psalmist asks the classic question that this area of study tries to answer: "What is man that You are mindful of him ... that You visit him?" (Psalm 8:4, NKJV). The word "man" means frail human being.

This article will attempt to answer that question.

Human life is valuable to God.

"Life is the cheapest thing in the world. ... It has no value. Of cheap things it is the cheapest."

The cynical philosophy belongs to Wolf Larsen, the fictional skipper in Jack London's novel *The Sea Wolf*. London's Darwin-reading character is a

literary construct that accurately represents what evolutionary thought demands when taken to its logical conclusion. Larsen saw no difference between human and animal life. He contended that a person's life was of value only to himself. Sadly, this is no fictional attitude.

In the streets of Dacca, Bangladesh, naked, undernourished children lie on the sidewalk as throngs of people pass by, taking no notice. In Cambodia and Thailand young girls are sold into lifelong prostitution as young as 8 to be thrown out when spent. In Africa, as in Asia, populations are ravaged by AIDS and decimated by military massacres, with few to care.

In our own nation, abortion continues to run wild. And Oregon holds the stigma of being the first state to legalize euthanasia. Tragically, this was upheld by the Supreme Court.

What is the value of one life among the earth's billions?

To God: Priceless. The Psalmist displayed wonder at this. And when Jesus walked the earth, He continually showed

the inclination to take time to minister to one individual human being.

Christians can be overwhelmed by the sea of human misery and fail to do anything. We must take our lead from Jesus who carried the weight of all the human race yet took time for individuals. Assemblies of God missionaries and ministries do value life and minister in all the areas I just mentioned.

The human soul is valuable to God.

There is one thing of ultimate value in every life — the soul. Jesus offered this rhetorical question: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

Unborn babies, the down-trodden, the elderly and the infirm — all are cheap only to the godless and deceived. To God and His people, every single life is priceless, especially because every life represents an eternal soul.

Evolutionary theory is not fact or science.

God created man. The Bible does not allow for "theistic evolution," the theory that

evolution was not blind chance but the method God chose to make man. One would have to discount scriptural accounts in order to believe this, most notably God's specific creation of Adam and Eve.

In order to fit God into the evolutionary mold, one must sacrifice a high view of Scripture. The authority of God's Word and theistic evolution cannot coincide.

The primary meaning of science (in the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary) is "the state of knowing: knowledge as distinguished from ignorance or misunderstanding," followed by "a department of systematized knowledge." Darwinian theory has never been proven scientifically and has even been discredited by non-Christian scientists.

Humans are created in God's image.

God created the first man and woman in His image. "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26,27).

This image was passed down.

God considered descendants of Adam and Eve to also have been created in His image, even though they were not created by a direct act as were Adam and Eve. "For in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6).

Fallen man still has the image of God, which is a reason God directs us to respect humankind. "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. ... This should not be" (James 3:9,10 NIV).

God's image is spiritual.

Though some try to make a distinction between the words "image" and "likeness" in Genesis 1, they appear in a common Hebrew literary form, two words emphasizing the same thing — mankind is like God (but not the same as God).

"God is Spirit" (John 4:24, NKJV), thus God's image in mankind must be spiritual. The body need not even be formed for life to have this image. "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4).

Mind, emotion and will are attributes that man, as a spiritual being, possesses.

God's image in man has been marred by sin.

Man was created faultless and innocent (Genesis 1:31; 2:25). When he fell into sin, that image, though it remains, was marred (Genesis 3). The tendency to sin is the worst mark of this. The conscience is perhaps the strongest remnant of that image, at least before salvation.

Christians are in the process of having that image restored.

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

"And have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him" (Colossians 3:10).

"And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man" (1 Corinthians 15:49).

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HUMANITY



Humans live in bodies, have spirits, are souls.

Jesus called himself Son of Man more often than Son of God, emphasizing His identification with mankind (but also His deity).

There are two main views as to what the Bible teaches of the makeup of man: trichotomy (or "three parts") and dichotomy ("two parts").

The three-part view teaches that body, spirit and soul are three distinct parts of man.

The two-part view, which is more widely held, says the Bible basically reveals the human composition to be of material and immaterial parts. Genesis 2:7 seems to settle the issue very early in the Scriptures: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (KJV).

Adam's body is inhabited and brought to life by the breath (or Spirit ... same word) of God. The breath of God yields the spirit of man. These two together compose a soul. Though soul is sometimes used interchangeably for spirit, it appears to represent all an individual is, with or without the body. (See Acts 27:37.)

The NIV captures the thrust of this when, in Luke 9:25, they use the word "self" instead of "soul" as in most versions: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"

Abortion is wrong.

In the Bible, life is considered human from conception. The

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ABCs OF SALVATION

To know God and be ready for heaven, follow these steps:

A. Admit you are a sinner.
"There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:10,23 (See Romans 5:8; 6:23.)

Ask God's forgiveness.
"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13

B. Believe in Jesus (put your trust in Him) as your only hope of salvation.
"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (See John 14:6.)

Become a child of God by receiving Christ.
"To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12 (See Revelation 3:20.)

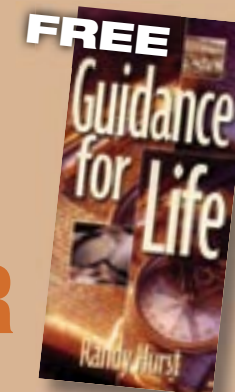
C. Confess that Jesus is your Lord.
"If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9 (See verse 10.)

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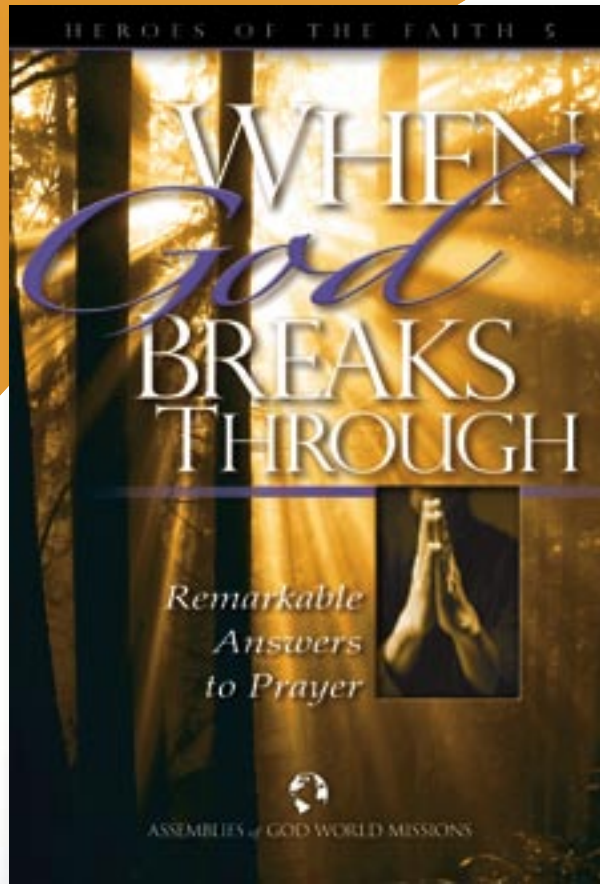
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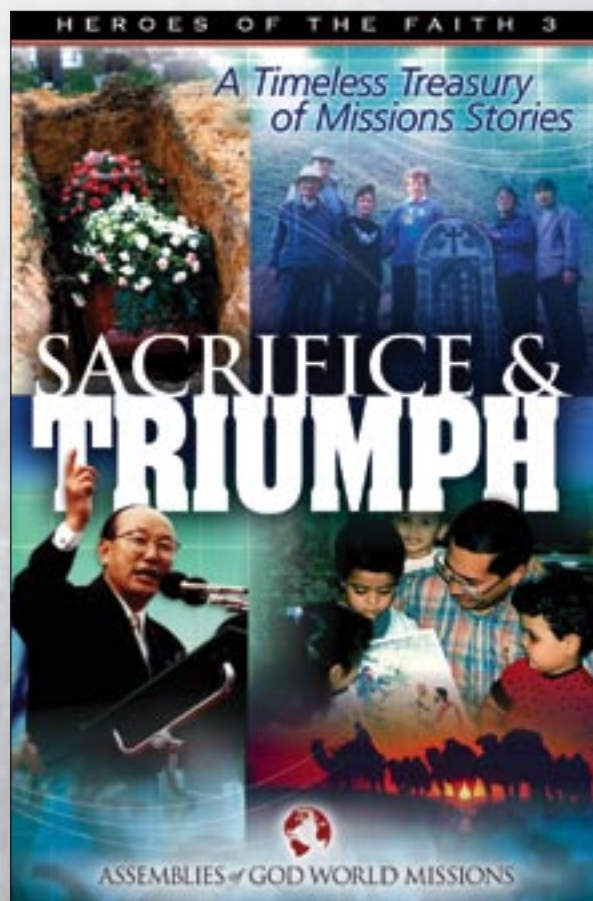



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Greek *brepheos* is used of babies and infants, including Jesus (Luke 2:12; 2 Timothy 3:15). This same word is used of the unborn child (Luke 1:41). Many verses refer to God's care of the child in the womb (Job 31:15; Psalm 139:13; Isaiah 44:2,24).

Human life is sacred. Murder is forbidden (Exodus 20:13); even a miscarriage caused by violence is condemned and judged (Exodus 21:22).

There is no unqualified right to do what we want with our own bodies. "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ... Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19,20, NKJV; see also 7:4).

Christians possess eternal life and will become immortal.

In 1 John 5:11-13, "eternal life" clearly becomes a present possession for the one who receives Christ. Believers live on after death (John 11:25,26). They do not experience spiritual death. Though Christians still die and their bodies decay, they receive immortality (no fleshly decay) when they receive their new spirit bodies when resurrected at Christ's return (1 Corinthians 15:42-44; Romans 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:10).

All Christians are saints.

"He may be a Christian, but he's no saint." You've probably heard something like this. But this is a statement that can't be

true. Every Christian is a saint.

A big to-do is made of officially conferring sainthood on those who have met the requirements of certain churches. One must have performed an authenticated miracle to achieve this status! But biblically there are no requirements beyond salvation.

The newest believer is just as much a saint as the sacrificial minister who has given his or her life to reach and minister to the lost and needy. (Check the use of the word *saints* in the New Testament for dozens of illustrations of this.)

While I usually don't feel like a saint myself, the simple truth is that, since I know Jesus, I am Saint Kenneth.

I hope you know Christ as your Savior. If you do, fill in your own name: Saint _____.

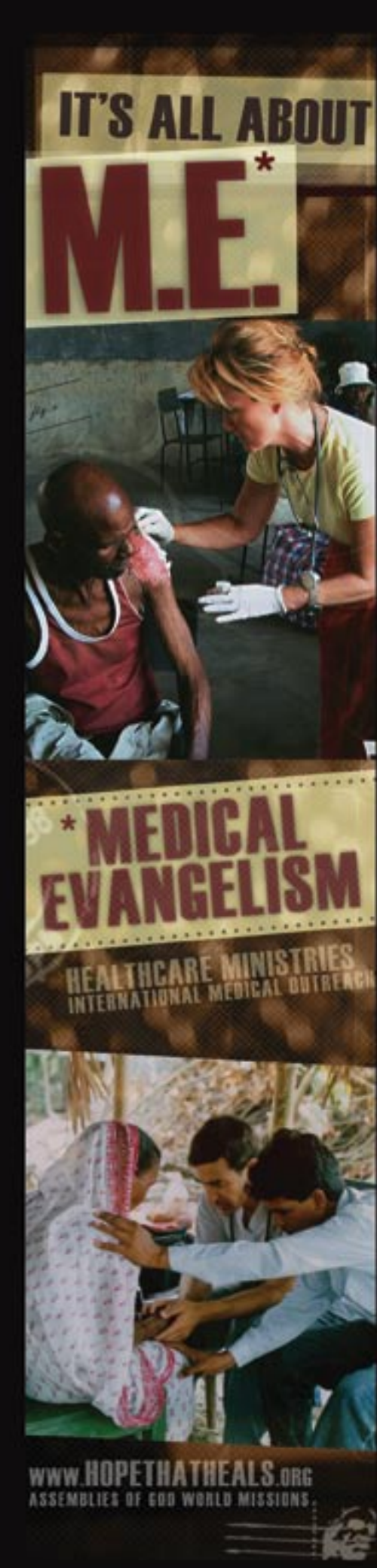
The greatest proof of mankind's value is that God pursues men and women.

The plan of salvation, which we will discuss in next week's issue, is evidence of God's pursuit of our eternal well-being. "What is man?" Every man or woman is a lost soul for whom Christ died, and to whom He offers salvation. (See The ABCs of Salvation on page 25.) **tpe**

Adapted from a chapter in the upcoming book Theology in a Nutshell. Next week's Nutshell article: "Sin and salvation."

Ken Horn is managing editor of *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*.

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.



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