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THE USE OF THE WORDS HEART, MIND, SOUL AND SPIRIT

O. M. NORLIE

This paper is a study of how often and in what ways the words heart, mind, soul and spirit are used. They are very familiar words, so familiar that they have lost much of their original meanings. They are often used with great looseness and overload the sentence in the form of tautology or verbosity, burying the thought beneath their rubbish.

Summary

No.	SOURCE	HEART	MIND	SOUL	SPIRIT	TOTAL	PAGES	AVER. PER PAGE
1	25 pastors (100 sermons)	531	90	155	204	980	1500	0.65
2	25 teachers (100 talks)	206	33	54	50	343	500	0.68
3	Bible	912	82	488	395	1897	1146	1.65
4	Lutheran Hymnary (618 hymns)	246	26	340	63	675	659	1.02
5	10 poems	120	31	64	51	266	129	0.93
6	7 prose works	171	315	249	162	897	1706	0.53
7	10 secular psychologies	44	1469	207	33	1753	3518	0.50
8	10 religious psychologies	923	1023	796	845	3587	3315	1.08
9	2 dogmatics	43	1092	175	1010	2320	944	2.45
10	2 philosophies	13	317	294	89	713	962	0.74
	Total	3209	4478	2822	2902	13431	14379	0.94
	Per cent	23.9	33.3	21.0	21.8	100.0	100.0	

In the examples just given, taken at random from thousands of like nature, it is often puzzling to know what is really meant by the terms. Especially is it difficult to know if these words are used synonymously or not. Often two or more of them are used in the same passage and then the difficulty in understanding them increases by leaps and bounds. In 45 per cent of the sermons and 40 per cent of the songs two or more of these words occurred. A few examples are given herewith.

From a sermon: "Christianity will bring spiritual power, power to the mind and the body and the soul. . . It will give an enlightened mind, a sane soul, a strengthened spirit and an inspired heart." . . . From a chapel talk: "May the Spirit fill our spirit and control our body, mind and soul. . . He suffered in spirit and mind. . . The

Devil has possession over men's minds and hearts and rules in their spirits and their souls." From the Bible (Luke 10:27): "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." From a hymn book ("The Lutheran Hymnary," No. 8):

"Draw us to Thee in mind and heart,
On heavenly things attending;
In spirit hence let us depart,
To Thee, O Lord, ascending.

Receive our souls to Thee above,
Thy name in death imploring."

From secular psychology (Magnusson): "He has taken his country to his heart." "Our souls shall even now enjoy heavenly company, and from this cloud of spirit companions we shall constantly receive suggestions." "In cases of sudden reformation it is still fearfully possible that the subconscious mind is pursuing the downward road." From religious psychology (Steven's "Psychology of the Christian Soul"): "The spirit of man has been helped not through some subtle influence of the consecrated elements upon the mind, but through the dealing of the believing soul with God. . . There is no other grace than the free act of God in the heart of man." From dogmatics (Weidner): "Willing, thinking and experiencing are predicated of the spirit, heart and soul indiscriminately, in so far as the spirit is the supreme principle, the soul the secondary principle, and the heart as the internal focus of the three-fold life of man. That the nous or mind is both as well the willing as the thinking faculty in man, is seen from the seventh chapter of Romans." From philosophy (Weidner's "Christian Ethics"): "The heart is the will in its union with the sensibilities." "Between spirit, soul and body, there is constant mutual intercourse. The superiority of man's destiny to that of all other creatures, displays itself not merely in his possession of mind and soul, but also in his bodily frame."

SOME EXPLANATIONS OF USE

In Webster's "International Dictionary" heart, mind and soul are shown to be Anglo-Saxon words; spirit has a Latin origin. They all have several meanings grouped into classes — heart, 13 classes; mind, 9 classes; soul, 8 classes; spirit, 13 classes. They are used interchangeably to denote the immaterial part of man or the whole man; also to denote any faculty of man — intellectual, emotional, volitional, moral, religious, or any combination of faculties. A complete roster of definitions of these four terms as actually

used would include more than 57 varieties, possibly 570. Let us note just three facts regarding current usage.

1. That heart, mind, soul and spirit are used interchangeably to mean exactly the same thing, namely, the immaterial part of man (assuming that man has two essential parts, the one material, the other immaterial). Perhaps 90 per cent of all the occurrences of these words fall under this class. Maher, for example, says in his "Psychology": "The terms ego, self, spirit are used as synonyms with mind and soul." Norlie, in his "Elementary Christian Psychology," says: "The word soul has a number of synonyms, as: spirit, ghost, mind, consciousness, brains, bosom, breast, blood, life, self, ego." Gordy, in an old-fashioned book called "New Psychology," says: "And if the soul is that which thinks and feels, and the mind is that which thinks and feels, they must be the same, must they not?" There is indeed much individual difference as to the use of these terms by those who hold to the two-fold division of human nature. The heart, thought of as the seat of the soul, hence, metaphorically, a synonym for soul, is the favorite term of preachers and poets; the mind is the choice of the psychologists and scientists. Some philosophers prefer the word soul and some cults the word spirit. The older psychologists, as Porter in his "Human Intellect," define psychology as the science of the soul; the men of today, as Seashore in his "Introduction to Psychology," avoid the word soul altogether, preferring mind or mental life. Breese thinks "it is better to avoid the term soul in psychology." Coe remarks that "the concept soul has largely disappeared from psychology, but self remains." But, no matter which of these four words a person may prefer, as a rule he uses the other three also as synonyms, to mean the same thing or about the same thing. The student of psychology must take note of this wide variety of expression in current usage.

2. One should remember, too, that there are divergent theories as to the component parts of man. Some hold that man consists of only one real essence, either matter only, or mind only. Some hold that man consists of two essences, matter and mind, or body and soul. This latter view is by far the most common and is known as dichotomy (from two Greek words which mean to cut into two parts). But there is also another view, bobbing up in season and out of season, namely, that man consists of at least three essential parts — body, soul and spirit. This theory is known as trichotomy (from two Greek words, meaning to cut into three parts). Beck, Delitzsch, Waller, Weidner, and Weiss, for example, are Tricho-

tomists. They believe that the soul is the bearer of the physical life and the spirit is the bearer of psychical life. Thus, in 1 Thess. 5:23, which reads: "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire," both soul and spirit refer to the immaterial part of man, but from different points of view. In the word soul the meaning is evidently the life principle which man has in common with the brute; in spirit the meaning is his life principle which he has in common with God. Dearmer, in his "Soul and Body," explains this passage from Paul as referring to the three nerve-center levels. Modin, in his "What is Man?" rejects trichotomy, but calls the immaterial part of man spirit and divides it into two parts, namely, heart and soul. Glover says: "I conceive of man as a threefold creature, compacted of body, mind and soul" ("Know Your Own Mind"). The Y. M. C. A. Triangle is trichotomic in its teaching — body, mind, spirit. It is plain, then, that those who hold this triple division of man's nature are not agreed as to their triads, and the following forms are therefore current:

Body-heart-mind	Body-soul-heart
Body-heart-soul	Body-soul-mind
Body-heart-spirit	Body-soul-spirit
Body-mind-heart	Body-spirit-heart
Body-mind-soul	Body-spirit-mind
Body-mind-spirit	Body-spirit-soul

Strangely enough, Webster's "International" prefers this last version — body-spirit-soul — rather than the one of Paul — body-soul-spirit. It seems that most speakers unconsciously have strong leanings toward trichotomy. They try to distinguish between soul in its ordinary life and soul in its moral and religious life, or innermost, deepest, loftiest, truest aspirations. The Church down through the centuries, in all its major branches, has rather frowned on trichotomy as not being a Scriptural teaching, but having its source in Plato. The Hebrew words *nephesh* (soul) and *ruach* (spirit) are interchangeable terms; so also are the corresponding Greek words — *psyche* (soul) and *pneuma* (spirit): These are also synonymous with the words for heart and mind. In 1 Kings 17: 21-22 it was the soul of a dead boy that returned to the body; in Luke 8:33 it was the spirit of a dead girl that returned. This proves that soul and spirit can mean exactly the same. Among the many arguments against trichotomy may be mentioned this one by Hodge in his "Systematic Theology": "We are conscious of our bodies and we are conscious of our souls, but no man is conscious of the soul as different from the spirit. Two, and only two, substances are revealed to man by his consciousness." A Chicago man

—L. F. Gruber— wrote a book last year entitled “What after Death?” A Glasgow man — R. K. Strang — wrote a review of this book in a London paper — “Words of Life” (Nov.-Dec.). Gruber speaks of soul and spirit as one and the same. Strang attacks him vigorously in this style: “It says little for his scholarship to find him continually confounding soul and spirit as one and the same — a thing which the Scriptures never do.” But the Scriptures do use these words interchangeably, not only in the case of the boy and girl just mentioned, but again and again. Thus, death is described as the giving up of the soul. (Gen. 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21; Acts 15:26; etc.) Death is described as the giving up of the spirit (Ps. 31:5; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; etc.) The Scriptural formula is sometimes “body and soul” (Ps. 73:26; Matt. 6:25; 10:28); and sometimes “body and spirit” (Eccl. 12:7; 1 Cor. 5:3, 5).

3. It appears from the quotations given, and many others that could be given, that there is a great deal more disagreement among the scholars than is expressed by the names of their schools, Monists and Dualists, or Dichotomists and Trichotomists, etc. For many speakers and writers seem to divide man up, not only into two and three essential parts, but into four and five. We should therefore have a school of Tetrachotomists, fighting for the four-fold idea, such as, body, soul, spirit, heart, and 23 other combinations. Also a school of Pentaplasotomists, advocates of a five-fold division, such as, body, soul, spirit, heart, mind, and 23 other combinations. Nearly all these 60 plus combinations are already now in use. They are used in the pulpit and the school room; they are used by the platform and the press.

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