



## **The human Condition**

Below - Extract from *'Does God Believe in Atheists'* by John Blanchard

It was recognition of human depravity which led Mark Twain to write, 'If man could be crossed with the cat, it would improve man, but would deteriorate the cat!'

In Man's fallen condition the body is affected: the Bible bluntly says that 'Your body is dead (that is, subject to death) because of sin'. The mind is affected: the Bible speaks of people 'darkened in their understanding', with the result that they 'cannot understand' biblical truths, which are spiritually discerned'. In this state, man's entire perspective on life is fatally distorted; he is unable to acquire what Francis Schaeffer calls 'true knowledge'. The will is affected: men have lost their desire and ability to conform to God's purposes and have instead become 'slaves to sin', unable by themselves to escape its relentless grip. The conscience is affected: it can become 'seared as with a hot iron', deadened to such an extent that it virtually ceases to function. The emotions, desires and imagination are affected: the Bible openly charges us with 'gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts'.

This is certainly a far-reaching condemnation, but endorsement of it can often be found outside of Scripture, such as in this 1989 statement in *The Times* by the then British prime minister Margaret Thatcher: 'For years when I was young and in politics with all my hopes and dreams and ambitions, it seemed to me and to many of my contemporaries that if we got to an age where we had good housing, good education and a reasonable standard of living, then everything would be set and we should have a fair and much easier future. We now know that this is not so. We are up against the real problems of human nature'.

The Bible tells us that these problems are part and parcel of the terrible alienation produced by sin, something which runs right through our modern culture. Man is separated from God, unable to fulfil the purpose for which he was created and restlessly searching to find answers to his spiritual needs. He is also separated from himself, and has become a tangled network of psychological pressures and problems, plagued by guilt, fear, shame, insecurity and anxiety. He is separated from other men, a rift reflected throughout human society. Children's tantrums, family tensions, teenage rebellion, lovers' tiffs, political in-fighting, racial prejudice, religious sectarianism, civil wars and international confrontations all stem from the fact that fallen human nature is a catalyst for conflict: as the Bible puts it, man is 'born to trouble as surely as sparks fly upward'. Finally, he is separated from nature. Having lost full dominion over it, he now wrestles with enormous ecological problems, none of which were present at creation, while nature itself, dislocated by the entrance of sin into the world, is in what the Bible calls 'bondage to decay', and has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time'.

All of this ties in with a brilliant analogy by the prophet Isaiah: 'We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.' Stuart Briscoe makes this comment: 'There is a

strange anomaly called humanity, a contradictory entity called people. We have on the one hand the ability to be incredibly creative and unbelievably destructive; wonderfully kind and abysmally cruel; the ability to build up and tear down; the ability to be very generous and to be thoroughly mean. We can be one thing to one person and the opposite to another, we can be one person at work and another at home. How in the world do we describe the conflicting nature of humanity? You can't describe it by saying humans are innately good or evil, or how do you explain the combination? There is only one way I know, and that is to say we were made by God in his image (having personality, powers of thought, feeling & will going far beyond the brute instincts of purely animal life, ability to reason & self consciously evaluate himself morally and ethically, & to be a loving social creature) and there are still the vestiges of his goodness in us that allow us to be creatively kind and good, but we are fallen, we're sheep with that innate tendency to wander, to go astray, to turn every one to our own way.'