



**ATLANTA CENTER
for APOLOGETICS**

The Contender

Earnestly Contending For The Christian Faith

"... earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."

The Importance of the Mind, Man was Created to Think.

by Eddie Bhawanie

The Genesis account declares: God created man, and placed His divine thumb-print on Man—made in the image of God, in the *Image Deo*. One of the greatest and noblest features of man is his capacity to think. Man, endowed with the ability to think and respond to his Maker, is distinct from plants, birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things. God made man different from the rest of the universe.

The Genesis account in chapters 2 and 3, holds out for us how the Creator, the infinite-personal God, communicated with man in a way that He does not communicate with plants, birds, four-footed beasts, and creeping things. He communicated with Adam and Eve, with true knowledge, although not exhaustive knowledge. He communicated with Man by way of language in understandable commands and words.

Language itself is a creation of God. Language and creation are the two *modes* through which God reveals Himself. These two modes, since: "In the beginning" (Gen. 1:1), have been inextricably linked. The existence of language is evidence of the *fact* that men and women are connected; first to the living God, and then to His created world. Reality is not essentially linguistic; *reality is essentially created by the infinite-living God*, including the language of man; and man expresses life's reality, and meaning by way of language. This Genesis account of creation gives reference to "the objective, historic existence of Adam and Eve, and the objective existence of God Himself."

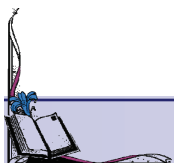
In this Genesis account, Man is invited by our Creator to name the animals. Naming the animals, required intelligent thought, selection, classification, and creativity. This we see Adam doing, symbolizing man's distinction from animals, and his dominion and rulership over the animal kingdom. In being different from animals, man is called upon to think and act differently: "Be not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee" (Psalm 32:9). The prohibition here is clear, man is called on not to behave like animals. Why? Because animals have a rudimentary brain, and they lack intelligence and understanding, and they operate on instincts.

John Stott, wisely commented on the behavior of man and animals: "Consequently, man is mocked and rebuked both when his behavior is more bestial than human, ("I was stupid and ignorant, I was like the beast toward thee.") and when the behavior of animals is more human than that of some human beings. Ants are more industrious and more prudent than the human sluggard. Oxen and donkeys tend to give their masters a more obedient recognition than God's people. And migratory birds are better at repentance, for when they go away on migration they always return, whereas some back-sliders go and fail to come back." (Proverbs 6:6-11; Isaiah 1:3; Jeremiah 8:7). The Genesis account records the Historic Fall of Man, and that account is short Genesis 3:6). Sin began in the thought-world of man and flowed outward. The sin was, therefore, committed in that moment Eve believed the virulent, alien, serpent Satan instead of God. She believed Satan, then she ate, and then she gave the fruit to her husband--Adam.

The result of the Fall is marked by the entrance of sin, shame, and guilt into the human race. In the Historic Fall, both the *will* and the *intellect*, fell, and man became, (or so he thought) autonomous from his God. Man became depraved, both in thought and behavior. The Bible is like a sledge hammer here, driving home the fact that evil entered into the world of man, and all men are now sinners (Gen. 6:5; Jer.17:9; Rom. 3:23 and 6:23).

The New Testament describes the depravity of the human *mind* and *intellect* as: "darkened, futile, senseless, alienated and enemies in your mind, the mind is darkened in the understanding, darkened in the mind, in thinking, the mind of the flesh" (Eph. 2:1-3; 4:18; Col. 1:21; Rom. 1:18-23; 8:5-8). Sin, shame, and guilt have affected the faculties of: the feelings, and the thinking. In spite of man's depravity, God said: "Come now, let's reason . . ." (Isa. 1:18). When a crime is first reported by the news media, it is often added that, "no motive has yet been discovered." It is assumed, you see, that even criminal behavior has a motivation of some kind.

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Is Christianity Just Psychological? Part I

By Bennie Castle

As misunderstood as the term “psychological” is it shall require some preliminary qualifications in order to establish what is meant by the objection, “Isn't the Christian experience psychological?” In the common understanding of this term I take it to mean that system of behavioral and mental therapy whereby a psychologist attempts to treat the emotional state of an individual through the manipulation of the “psyche.” By the Christian experience I take the objector to mean conversion, or those times when the objective truths of the Holy Scriptures are subjectively believed by individuals with the resultant behavioral, mental, and emotional changes that go along with that faith. Implied in the objection, however, is that the Christian experience is a manipulation or brainwashing of the person so that they become enslaved to a behavioral/mental code of conduct (i.e. law) for the purpose of rectifying their emotional state (i.e. being blessed). It is this view of Christianity that says the cross of Christ is of no effect.

Founded upon a misunderstanding of the true nature, purpose, and state of man, modern psychology has no place in the church nor do its methods or insights. Further, most of what passes for the Christian experience today is not rooted in the personal submission to the truth of the Gospel which begins with God's sovereign regeneration of incapable sinners. Due to the influx of psychological methods into the church, the preaching of the cross has diminished, therefore, much of what the objector may see in the church is “psychology” though not Christian.

In this article we will attempt to, firstly, show what the Christian experience is using Psalm 51:7-13. Secondly, show how this is not psychology by examining the doctrine of the mystical union as explained by Paul in Galatians 2:19,20. Finally, we will briefly sketch how the right use of the Law of God is our main weapon in fighting the influence of modern unbelieving psychology in the church.

Exegesis of Psalm 51:7-13—NKJV

⁷ “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Make me hear joy and gladness; that the bones that you have broken may rejoice. ⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You.”

This psalm is a confession of David unto the Lord for his transgressions. David's prayers reflect a profound understanding of God's activities in restoring a penitent. David has sinned, or violated God's Law; his conscience bears witness to this and David recognizes that he needs mercy from the hands of God. In verse 4 we find the infinitive *dābar*, which is rendered ‘when thou speakest’ or command. This is the term

used for the Ten Commandments or 10 Words (*Commands*). Here is a specific reference to the Law of God in relation to confession of sin and repentance. David has in mind his violation of God's Law and that his sin is not in conformity to that standard. The second verbal noun in the second couplet of verse 4 is *shāphat* meaning to rule or to judge. David links these two thoughts together in this couplet, that of God's speaking His Word and



ruling according to that previously spoken Word. David entertains no notions of a God who does not provide a clear declaration of His will and who unalterably acts according to it. The God David is dealing with is the Lord God Almighty, Who “...remembers His covenant forever, the word *which* He commanded, for a thousand generations.” (*Psalms 105:8*). David further confesses his inability to live up to God's express standard of conduct by telling of his depraved beginnings even from his mother's womb. Instead of using this as an excuse this drives him to beg for more redemptive grace, not lowering the standard but restoring him to favor through the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit working through the truth of the Gospel.

Verses 7-13 possess a remarkable structure that profoundly expresses the relationship between God's sovereign, free, and gracious activities in restoring the sinner and the humble, dependent, and wholly subjective state of the penitent. The verses are structured in this way: 7, 9, and 11 describe the divine perspective while 8, 10, and 12 describe the human perspective in this process. Verse 13 describes the result of this restoration, that the man is used of God to convert other sinners through teaching them His ways.

Comprised of seven very Hebrew couplets, this passage is broken up into three quatrains with a closing couplet, verse 13. Each quatrain is made up of two verses or couplets; they are divided like this; verses 7 and 8, quatrain 1; verses 9 and 10, quatrain 2; verses 11 and 12, quatrain 3. All three quatrains contain one couplet or verse describing the divine perspective and one describing the human perspective of David's restoration. The primary and secondary expressions of each couplet parallel the corresponding expressions in the other couplets belonging to the same category. In other words, verses 7 and 9, both belonging to the divine category parallel each other by expressing congruent ideas associated with sin and the restorative/redemptive process. In this passage David weaves an elaborate yet concise tapestry which masterfully expresses the conversion/confession/repentance/restoration cycle.

Being thus, no participation or efficient action can be attributed to the object. The object is purely passive, like clay in the potter's hands. The object of all these actions is David, our object sinner, while God is the subject acting upon, in, and through David. Verse 10 stands out from verses 8 and 12 in that God is asked to act sovereignly in recreating David's heart. While David can hear joy and receive salvation's benefits He can have no participation in restoring his own heart, God must act.

The Renewal of the Mind ...Continued by Eddie Bhawanie

We now move to the doctrine of redemption which the living God has fully achieved through the merits of Christ's work on the cross. The Gospel of Christ is addressed in words to the mind. Paul makes a distinction between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man: "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (I Cor. 1:21). Here the apostle contrasts human wisdom and "revelation--a rational revelation" of truth of the Gospel of Christ. He declared: 'what we preach,' is the crucified and risen Christ. Nevertheless, the Gospel is still addressed to the *mind* of man, a divinely ordered means of opening the mind and heart and saving the soul of man.

Man's redemption in Christ, carries with it the renewal of the divine image in man which was fallen and corrupted in the Eden Paradise (Gen. 3). This renewal includes the mind. The New Testament addresses re-deemed-fallen man as: "being renewed in

the spirit of the mind" (Eph. 4:23). Through the redemption, the redeemed man is encouraged to, think the thoughts of God by: "thinking on these; whatever things are lovely . . ." (Phil. 4:8), Christians are, therefore, encouraged to: "not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. . ." (Rom. 12:2), and to; "put on the mind of Christ" (Phil. 2:5), because, in reality, the Christian man has "the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:15-16). In the redemption we can now use the mind to love God, to obey God, to receive God, to glorify God, to love our neighbor, to love self, and to love our enemies" (Matt: 22:37-40), which previously we could not do. Only the Christian faith places importance on the human mind.

The Christian mind is a mind that is trained and disciplined perhaps in five areas: (i) to understand the intellectual

content of Scripture, (ii) to understand the substance of Scripture, (iii) to understand the thought-forms of his generation, (iv) to construct the Christian worldview and propositions; the ability to know, to obey, and live out (by demonstration) his faith in Christ, and (v) to give a ready defense of the Gospel of Christ.

Summary:

In Western contemporary thought today, there is a drift of the Christian mind away from the truth-claims of the Christian faith – to secularism. There is still a Christian ethic, a Christian practice, and a Christian spirituality in our culture today. But the thinking is quite secular. It's humanistic at its center—man is the measure of all things. There is, therefore, the need and the challenge to get back to Biblical-Christian thinking, and the importance of using the human mind with the Bible!

THE 'ISMS'

Humanism

Atheism

Agnosticism

Materialism

Pluralism

Rationalism

Mysticism

Deism

Pantheism

Marxism–Stalinism

Existentialism

Nihilism

Catholic Scholasticism

Fideism

Paganism

Theism



Mysticism

Mysticism is frequently defined as an experience of direct communion with God, or union with the Absolute, but definitions of mysticism (a relatively modern term) are often imprecise and usually rely on the presuppositions of the modern study of mysticism — namely, that mystical experiences involve a set of intense and usually individual and private psychological states.

Mysticism involves the practice of contemplation both in the philosophical sense of the contemplation of truth and in the 'supernatural' sense of having knowledge of God via a life of prayer. Nevertheless, the 'mystic way' is primarily practical, not theoretical, and is something in which the whole self is engaged. The great Christian mystics have spoken of how they acted rather than how they speculated. Some have placed a particular emphasis on certain altered states, such as visions, trances, levitations, locutions, raptures, and ecstasies, many of which are altered bodily states.

In the late nineteenth century mysticism became the object of much research, partly because of the development of psychology and partly because of the new comparative study of religion by which phenomena were observed and compared across cultures.

In the tradition of Christian mysticism, Biblical texts are typically interpreted metaphorically. Two major themes of Christian mysticism are (1) a com-

plete identification with, or imitation of Christ, to achieve a unity of the human spirit with the spirit of God; and (2) the perfect vision of God, in which the mystic seeks to experience God "as he is," and no more "through a glass, darkly." (1 Corinthians 13:12) Because we are not yet perfect, knowledge and prophecy, therefore, has a place among us as long that imperfection cleaves to us.

Christian mystics have pursued a threefold path in their pursuit of holiness. While the three aspects have different names in the different Christian traditions, they can be characterized corresponding to body, soul (or mind), and spirit. The first, the way of purification, is where aspiring Christian mystics start. This aspect focuses on discipline, particularly in terms of the disciplinary aspect of the human body. What is sought here is salvation in the original sense of the word, referring not only to one's eternal fate, but also to healing in all areas of life.

The second phase, the path of illumination, has to do with the activity of the Holy Spirit enlightening the mind and giving insights into truths. The third phase, usually called contemplation in the Western tradition, refers to the experience of oneself as in some way united with God. If the practice of Christian mysticism drives us to authentic praise to the glory of God; if those things which have been learned, received, heard, and observed in Christ are truly practiced, then the God of peace shall be with you. (see Phil. 4:6-9)

By Pennon Lockhart

Our Vision Statement

To defend the ultimate truth-claims of Biblical Christianity as eternally binding on all mankind and to present these claims to our contemporary culture with intellectual excellence through our life and work.

ACA current activities:

"Understanding the Christian Worldview and Thought-forms as Rooted in the Flow of Biblical History" Every 1st and 3rd **Saturday** of each month at the AUBS Counseling Center, from 9:30 A.M. -- 12:30 P.M. (Taught by Dr. Eddie Bhawanie — bhawanie@atlantacenterforapologetics.org)

"Understanding the Christian Worldview and Thought-forms as Rooted in the Flow of Biblical History" Location: The Tabernacle [off I-285E, Exit 43], 1580 Agape Way, Decatur, GA 30035; Phone 404.284.5683, 770.833.2696; Time: 7:30 P.M., **Wednesdays** (June —September, 2008) (Classes taught by Dr. Eddie Bhawanie)

Weekly Bible Class 'The Book of Romans' with Greenforest Community Baptist Church, Wednesday evenings from 7:30 P.M.—8:30 P.M. in Bldg. 1, Cornerstone Room , 3250 Rainbow Dr., Decatur, GA., Instructor-Dea. Danny Outlaw & Dr. P. Lockhart (For information contact: Dr. Pennon Lockhart at 770-996-5810 — aubs.lockhartp@comcast.net)

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