

STRAIGHTWAY

**"AND STRAIGHTWAY THEY FORSOOK THEIR NETS, AND FOLLOWED HIM" (MARK 1:18).
CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP**

The Christian Mind Facing the Illusions of the End Time

Dr. H. T. Spence

When God made Adam from the "moist dirt" of the earth [Heb., *ad-hama*], a multitude of wondrous complexities were a part of that creation. As late as our present time in history, science is still discovering more wonders and mysteries that are part of the complexity of man. How could anyone believe in evolution and its promulgation that the human body came together by "chance," when the body clearly and boldly announces that a God of law, order, design, purpose, and beauty brought forth this creature through omnipotence and wisdom? The very intricacies of veins, arteries, vessels, and capillaries, along with the seventy-eight organs, truly declare this body a miracle of wonder. Of these organs five are vital for life, but the most vital is the brain.

The Brain versus the Mind

As the most complex of the organs, the brain includes some 90 billion neurons. Neurons are the basic unit of the nervous system. These specialized cells communicate information to other nerve, muscle, and gland cells throughout the human body. Their electrical and chemical signals coordi-

nate all the essential functions of life. However, an important distinction between the complex physical brain and the human mind must be established. The brain is made of physical matter whereas the mind is not made of physical matter. The brain can be touched by a human hand and studied, but the mind cannot be touched and seen: it is invisible. The brain is a conglomeration of nerves, cells, blood vessels, and the like; the mind is a conglomeration of thoughts, memories, emotions, and the like. The brain has been placed by God within the body and has its definite appointed existence for the full control of the body. God's creative wisdom has placed the brain in the most important part of the body: the head. The mind has no definite designated place within the body. While it is presumed to reside within the brain, the mind is definitely part of the soul.

Although the medical world can demonstrate that the brain can be diagnosed with diseases, the mind cannot be diagnosed with physical diseases. Perhaps the brain can be seen as the "center of control of all the vital functions of the body." If the brain ceased to function, even for a few min-

utes, physical life would be in danger of shutting down. Although this brain controls the body, the mind deals with memory, thought, emotions. The mind is not made up of cells; it is tied into the conscience of a person, his understanding and thought process. The debate on the difference between the brain and mind goes back to the days of the philosopher Aristotle, before the birth of Christ.

God made the brain and the mind distinct; the brain dies with the body, but God preserves the mind. We believe that the mind, though closely associated with the brain, is part of the soul and will live on forever somewhere in eternity. The close association of these two entities is similar to the terms *soul* and *soulish*. When the soul is living through the body by being consumed in the desire of the flesh, it is said to be *soulish*. Such a

person would be called a *soulish* person; the “natural man” (1 Cor. 2:14) is called *pseuche* in the New Testament Greek, the “soulish man.”

Though the brain is identified with the body and its functions, the mind is identified with the soul that will live on after the body dies. The mind includes both man’s memory and his thought process. Luke 16:25–31 gives the true story of the rich man in lower Hades looking up and seeing Lazarus in upper Hades, or in Abraham’s bosom. Here we read of the rich man’s thoughts and memories:

But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.... Then he [the rich man] said, I pray therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.

Abraham proceeded to inform the rich man that his brothers “have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” But the rich man pressed for Abraham to send Lazarus, for they would believe one who came back from the dead. Abraham responded, “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” This proves there will be memory of our sojourn on earth.

Likewise, we also read in Revelation

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5:9, 10 of the continuation of the mind in heaven:

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Both in hell and heaven, the mind will continue to live and function.

In the work of God's creation and the preservation of that creation through providence, we carefully observe that God gave us the two realms of the natural and the spiritual. And in those two realms, we acknowledge the mind does the thinking, while the brain has the ability to express those thoughts via language and speech. It is true that the brain can be diseased in a variety of ways, but the mind cannot be diseased. There certainly are what could be declared organic malfunctions affecting the brain which may be caused by brain damage. These malfunctions could be in the area of chemical disorders within the body or physical attacks on the brain by the effects of tumors, or cancer, or even some genetic disorder. Yes these can affect the brain and, in turn, the way a person thinks; at the same time, a vast number of other human problems have been falsely classified as "mental illnesses" for which there is no evidence that they have been engendered

by disease or illness at all. As a description of these problems, mental illness, as used in our contemporary time, is nothing more than "a figure of speech" and is not a true physical diagnosis. The Scriptures plainly reveal that organically based problems could affect the mind, but also *sin* and its attitudes and behavior can profoundly affect the mind. Yet the Bible does not reveal any third cause of problems that approximates the modern concept of mental illness.

The Crucial Problem of the Mind

According to Scripture the beginning of such human problems must come from either a *physical* malfunction or a *spiritual* problem. Medical authorities declare that less than three percent of all brain disease or mental disturbances have an organic basis. If this be true, we need to ask the question: What is the problem with the remaining ninety-seven percent! If these illnesses and disorders are not caused by the organic brain, or the physical body, or by God Himself (1 Sam. 16:14, King Saul), then what is the source of the problem? The Bible gives only one other answer—it is either the result of our sins or the presence of demonic influence. Every problem of humanity has an answer in the Bible, and there is a reason for mental problems.

We do read in several passages of God disturbing the mind and thought life. In Romans 1:28 we read, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their

knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." We also read in 2 Thessalonians 2:11, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." Another passage dealing with the apostasy of the End Time declares, "And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:4).

Yet we once again declare that the contemporary concept of "mental illness" is a myth! Equally so, it must be declared that the mind is spiritually sick because of the fall of man, and the result of the curse that came upon man is because of his fall. Thus, in this context the mind is affected by sin. Because of this, a healing of the mind can only come from God!

The Crisis of Man's Fall into Sin

The Bible declares that at the beginning of creation Adam was "fearfully and wonderfully made." He walked in constant fellowship with his Creator. This creature man was strong and perfect in every way: physically, mentally, and spiritually. In Genesis 2:19 before man fell into sin, God gave him the great monumental task of naming all the animals and birds. This indicates that Adam possessed a tremendous mind of thought and perception. The dominion of the earth as given to him by God in Genesis 1:28 suggests Adam's capability and great mental authority. Yet, at that time he was in total subjection to God's will. Before

creating the woman, God spoke to Adam and placed a restriction upon him. This tested his obedience to his Creator, which was only a singular requirement: that of forbidding him to eat of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:16, 17). This commandment immediately suggests that God desired for man's thinking process of mind to be *under* His divine control. Gradually, Satan took note that the only way to turn man from God's divine control would have to come by changing man's thinking process. This change of thinking could destroy the fellowship the Creator enjoyed with His creation. Satan knew he must manipulate this first couple to think *independently* from God and His Word. Satan knew through his own experience in heaven (when he convinced one-third of the angels to join him in rebellion against God) that sin must be birthed in the thought-life of this couple, first in Eve who would then influence Adam. The power of change must begin within the mind of man. Could man be tempted to question God's words, believing he had the ability to reason through the right or the wrong of God's command? If his reasoning of God's words could show a flaw in those words, or that God was holding back something precious from the man, then Adam would become his own god.

Let us pause for a moment and introduce a word that has been named by Merriam-Webster as its word of the year for 2022: *gaslighting*. Note its

official definition for *gaslighting*:

Psychological manipulation of a person usually over an extended period of time that causes the victim to question the validity of their own thoughts, perception of reality, or memories and typically leads to confusion, loss of confidence and self-esteem, uncertainty of one's emotional or mental stability, and a dependency on the perpetrator.

Did the words of the old serpent gaslight man's mind and control it to such a depth of manipulating man to reject the words and command of God? In our own contemporary times, we read of the powers of "fake news," especially from governments, carefully manipulating through news media to control our thinking about politics, health, the COVID pandemic and even the economy. This "gaslighting" goes all the way back to that old serpent and his subtle move on Eve and her thinking. How did the control of her thinking begin? It was simply the questioning of God's Word: "Yea, hath God said?" He attempted to plant doubt in her mind as to the veracity of God's Word. Oh, how even more so today the overwhelming questioning of God's Word is evidenced by the ever-expanding six hundred English translations, paraphrases, and revisions gaslighting Christianity!

Eve could have resisted the Devil, but instead, she succumbed to the serpent's sensual and manipulative psychological appeal to her thinking.

Once she partook of the forbidden fruit, she then influenced her husband Adam (Gen. 3:6b, 17). Her own gaslighting then profoundly affected him. We read that "the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." They were drawn into the new world of sin through the manipulation of their minds. The apostle Paul reveals that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). And in succumbing to the reasoning of the old serpent (the Devil), they fell into sin. Because of this transgression, they were stripped of intimate communion with God and removed from the presence of God's glory. A new nature, called the *sin nature*, entered Adam, and man has never been the same since then. The malignant sin nature has laid hold of the offspring of Adam, progressively deepening in power and influence from generation to generation. This invisible nature, the sin nature, became a far-reaching influence within the human nature.

Though the unfolding of history illustrates that men have been brilliant in mind and thinking, time also proves that the power of sin within man overtakes every aspect of man, including his mind. Genesis 6:5 states "that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." The depth of this statement is overwhelming: the great wickedness within man began first to

profoundly affect the thoughts of his heart and mind; and then the formation of those thoughts together (his imagination) was only evil continually. And it was this aspect of man, the thought life of his heart, that now controlled the product of his thoughts, his imaginations.

Imagination included his thoughts prompting both purposes and desires for life. Even more profoundly, "Every imagination of his thoughts [Heb., *chasheb*, meditations, purposes, plans] was only evil continually." His mind had now become the dark masterpiece of endless evil, with sin's debauchery going deeper than man's spirit. Man's total depravity in spirit and soul profoundly affected his body.

The Fallen Mind of Man

Man's nature radically changed at the Fall! In 1 Corinthians 2:14 we read of the "natural" man [Gr., *pseuchikos*] where the soul of man and all of its parts are consumed in the living of the flesh. The natural man now made him believe he was only flesh, without the concept of a soul (Gen. 6:3). We are told in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God." The reason is that the present fallen mind of man views the things of God as foolishness. The natural man cannot know the things of God "because they are spiritually discerned." The mind of fallen man has no understanding of God. For the spirit, yea, the mind of man, is in rebellion against God—and thus can-

not receive the true concept of God, or even the true concept of life itself, because of the plague of sin that controls the mind of man. It must also be biblically seen that as sin goes deeper in its pervasiveness of the total man, everything that man perceives must go through this fallen mind before going through any other part of man. Because of the Fall, man's mind is in insanity, and the deeper he goes into sin the deeper the mind will be infected by insanity. For as man rejects God, God will reject man and increase his fall into deeper rejection of the Creator (Romans 1).

How must we view the mind of the fallen man? Only the Bible reveals the truth and the clarity of the fallen condition of the mind of man. In 1 Timothy 6:5 we read, "Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth." Here the mind is designated as "corrupt" (the Greek includes the meaning "destroyed"). Man has been mentally corrupted and destroyed both within and without, not only because of the fall of his nature, but also because of the deepening powers of the sin principle that now consumes his life.

In addition, the Bible reveals that the mind is defiled: "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15). In Colossians 2:18 we are told, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a

voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." Thus, man will never think right until he is born of God! Paul warns the Ephesians in 4:17, 18,

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.

The "vanity of the mind" is the description of one who has a misconception of reality, or a mind that is void of true understanding. Indeed, the natural man considers spiritual things foolish because he himself is a fool. In his vain mind is lodged a distorted image of the reality of truth, of life, of the living of life, and of right and wrong. And the way we live daily will be affected by how we think.

Dear reader, this explains the intense pursuit of the world for money, pleasure, immorality, sports, etc., which never satisfies the soul's thirst for the true God. This truly reveals that man is driven by a vain and foolish mind.

Spiritual blindness is another plague of the human mind away from God. The apostle Paul unveils the truth in Ephesians 4:18 that the sinner's "understanding" is darkened. This shroud of darkness over the mind is caused by

the spiritual blindness of the heart. The sinner has been cut off from God's life through ignorance and, therefore, is devoid of all spiritual knowledge. Our word *ignorance* stems from our word *agnostic* meaning "not to know."

But with all the trouble of the mind with which we are born, there is also the Devil and his powers influencing the mind. Note 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

In the light of all of these biblically revelatory statements about the mind of the sinner, it must be soberly discerned that the radical change imperatively needed must be to the mind first. This radical change in and of itself will be a miracle of God as the Holy Spirit must grant the change of mind for the Lord to enter the heart of a man. We need a miracle from the Lord in the work of *repentance*: there must be a change of perceptive thinking. And "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." What words of insight are given in Luke 15:17 concerning the prodigal son, "And when he came to himself." It takes the work of God to bring the mind to sanity. It begins with repentance; and the deeper we go in God, the more our thinking should become what God intended: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye

transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

Salvation for the Mind

As the life of a human being begins to unfold after being birthed into this world, the power of the sin nature within the spirit-heart of the soul begins to make its way through every aspect of human living. The heart of the soul is where that Adamic pollution is initially found, and over time this pollution becomes the indwelling sin principle. It becomes the influence deepening itself in the heart, the will, and also the mind.

We have seen thus far how extensively the mind can be affected by sin. Added to this power is the influence of the age in which we live. Finally, the Devil himself contributes his influence of thought and insanity. We have also observed that the thinking becomes corrupt concerning thoughts about life, the self, the world, ordinate affections, God, and all creation. The mind can drift away from how God made it to think and enter into an illogical, irrational realm where it convinces itself this is normal thinking. We have observed that Romans 1 becomes the classic reality of how far in natural thinking of reason, rightness, and goodness one can go; it could enter a realm where logic is illogical, right becomes wrong and wrong becomes right, and ultimately a reprobate mind can result. We have also ob-

served in Romans 1:28 that a mind of which God cannot approve can be given over to being reprobate. It is possible that a mind can be totally rejected by God. Hebrews 6:8 declares, "But that which beareth [present tense, 'continually beareth'] thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." Note Paul's exhortation in 2 Corinthians 13:5-7a:

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. Now I pray to God that ye do no evil.

We observed previously in Ephesians 4:17 about those who "walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind." Who is a person who walks in the vanity of the mind? He is one who has a misconception of reality, a mind void of true understanding. In 2 Thessalonians 2:11, we read of God giving over to delusion or wandering those who do not have a love for the truth. When we read in the New Testament of those who "are led astray," it refers to those who roam hither and thither, the phrase meaning those who are in constant mental straying.

The Final Frontier

But what is the final frontier of a mind gone astray? In 1 Samuel 16:14, we read of an evil spirit coming upon

King Saul. The Hebrew expresses that a spirit of melancholy or depression came from a demon upon Saul. Second Timothy 1:7 speaks of the “spirit of fear.” One of the most powerful dark influences to come upon a person’s mind is when a demon controls the thinking of a person. It can come through the fear of death or dying; because of this men could be “all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:15). The final frontier is known when the mind through the will opens the heart to be possessed by the powers of darkness. Perhaps the worst of such darkness is presented in Luke 8:26 in the context of the man from Gadara. We are told in Matthew 8:28–34 that there were two possessed with demons, but Mark and Luke focused on one of the two. The man declares his name is Legion, a term indicating a definite number of six thousand men of the Roman army. Was it possible for that many demons to reside in one man? If so, it likewise reveals the potential depth of the heart of man for which God had created man—for Himself!

Yet how far can a man be controlled by objective powers? Gaslighting can be in the controlling powers of either humans or demons. Such control is the initial work of the Devil: to destroy the mind of the individual into thinking irrationally and antithetically to what is true, and away from God. Oh, the bitter shame of life and the inhumane manner of living that described this man from Gadara! Indeed, the mind

can be utterly destroyed in its thinking and, in turn, can destroy the body.

What were the symptoms evidenced in the demon-controlled man prior to the Lord changing his life? We first read he wore no clothes; he had a propensity to nudity. Dear reader, we are in a society given over to the final frontier of insanity, where the powers of demonic forces are commingling with humanity’s thoughts. And because of this, we are witnessing the evidences. Our country has entered a profound, insane thought life that has produced a bold, open acceptance of nudity in the social media, in movies, magazines, television, and even in many textbooks of our schools. The open display of nudity is witnessed in the contemporary music of our times, in politics that are interwoven into the human trafficking of Washington, as well as in many of the religions that include promiscuous sexual overtones. We read of this man in Gadara, “For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness” (Luke 8:29). This man had often been driven to despair, hopelessness, and utter darkness. We read that he also lived in the tombs; he was unable to live with human society, and his life had become preoccupied with death.

It is amazing to note how many professing Christians in the End Time are filled with insecurity, and their decisions in life are often driven by fear. In

the Gospel according to Mark, we read of this man being restless and destitute, "crying and cutting himself with stones." The morbid influences contributing to body mutilation are ever escalating in our Western civilization. The tattoo parlors are located on nearly every street corner in America; both men and women have made their God-given skin a walking tapestry to flauntingly advertise for the world and the Devil. If the enemy of our souls cannot keep us from coming to Christ, he will do all he can before our conversions to permanently mar our visual testimonies after we become a Christian. His visual symbols and markings will be openly right there with the so-called testimonies of Christ. And then there are the body piercings, which have become more and more extensive in appearance, especially the display found in the very countenances of people. Cuttings are also becoming more and more prevalent bringing about permanent markings and scars upon society's youth. We read in Leviticus 19:28, "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the LORD." All forms of markings are now the norm for human society. This will make it easier for a global society to accept the name, the number, or the mark of the Beast upon the forehead or forearm when the hour comes. We have been mentally conditioned for such a marking to come. Truly the human race is bent on destroying itself.


Another power of the End Time that abounds everywhere and controls the mind is all forms of addictions. Such addiction control is causing humanity to make a mockery of itself. We read in Revelation 9:21, "Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries [Gr., *pharmaceutikon*, the connection of drugs to the occult], nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts." All this is the product of much thinking into realms beyond the normality of humanity. Perhaps one of the terms that could be used at this hour in history is found in Matthew 4:24, "and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils." In the Greek the vivid word for "possessed with devils" is *demonized*. When we take this word and understand its full revelation, it reveals a demonization, or degrees of being demonized. Dare we say that every soul is demonized to some extent, and it simply intensifies in degrees of control over time? The final frontier of sin's effect upon the mind is when the will opens the mind to a greater and deeper power of darkness that produces thoughts intertwined in and within the kingdom of darkness. Demonic possession is becoming more of the norm of our society. We would be surprised to learn how many people we pass in the daily concourse of life who are under the control of demonic powers, unlike the living of humanity several decades ago. Our country and its ruling political and reli-

gious powers today reveal how deep we are in demonic activities. Society has been taken captive in the stronghold of Satan, who is truly the god of this world!

Conclusion

We are witnessing an unprecedented hour on the planet Earth where the final frontier of the mind is being resolved in a demonization of global proportion. Western civilization has been the last bastion of sound thinking because it was strongly influenced by Christianity. The apostle Paul gives the warning in Ephesians 4:27, "Neither give place to the devil." The verb is found in the present, active, imperative in its condemnation. "Stop giving place to the Devil." Don't give room or opportunity for the Devil to act in you or through you. This reveals there must be a special act of vigilance and self-control over the mind and thought life,

so the Devil does not get a hold on the mind and our thinking. It is not to be understood in this burden that we are looking for a demon in every nook and cranny or for one to be behind every bush. But demonic powers are increasing in their influence on the planet; God is permitting this as part of the judgment of the End Time.

Christians have been given a saved mind, and we must carefully use it and at the same time protect it. Since our bodies and even our souls are not completely redeemed, we are still plagued with disease and mental attacks. We must ever be on guard against the world, the flesh, and the Devil that are ever out to destroy us. It is imperative that we remain obedient to the Word of God and be given to faith in that Word. We must not let our emotions, mind, and proclivities of thought be controlled by anyone except the Lord Jesus Christ. 

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The Power of the Mind's Imagination

Dr. H. T. Spence

The powers of existentialism have saturated the global philosophy of Post-modernism. In this generation the reality of life and death seems more difficult to face. Increasingly, mankind has involved itself in the realm of drugs or anything that can bring an ease to the mind in living life and facing the reality of self. The "virtual" world is becoming more and more the "real" world to much of humanity.

Unfortunately, the effects of this tragic situation have not bypassed evangelical Christian churches. The vast majority of Christianity is plagued with professing Christians who display anything but true, biblical victory over the everyday situations of life. It is clear that they have failed to appropriate the fullness of Christ's atonement through His Word, becoming "unbelieving believers," or "Christian atheists." Although they may declare they are believers in Christ, when it comes to daily living, their minds are controlled by fear, doubt, despair, defeatism; darkness cloaks their minds and hearts with seemingly no hope of escape. We need to ask the question: How have such powers taken over the mindset of the nations, especially in a time when man boasts of such technical and medical prowess? Why are we found in this mental and emotional plight? It seems the more we learn in the natural, the worse we become emotionally and mentally. The more

conveniences we have, the worse off we are. Where has this leech come from which is sucking the very existence of hope and victory out of the thoughts of humanity? Bondage seems to be the noose that has wrapped itself around refreshing and encouraging thoughts in life. What is happening to mankind? The very living of life is dying within man; the very heart and soul of existence is rapidly decaying, demanding a change in definition merely in order to survive. Humanity is transitioning from the real to the artificial and the virtual. Where are the children of God who demonstrate that "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4)? Why are we being overcome by the powers of the age rather than being the biblical victorious overcomer? The salvation of Jesus Christ must include our minds! While the world seemingly has gone insane, is there not healing for the mind of the believer? The need is critical in our day while the world, the flesh, and the Devil are warring against our minds in order to control our thinking.

The Imagination of the Mind

The creation of man has proved to be so complex that man perhaps will never come to understand the vastness of his capabilities this side of eternity. Truly, the multifaceted complexity of the body is still being explored, and with certain parts and functions, the

purpose of their existence and realms of function are just being discovered and are still fascinating the scientific and medical world.

Our burden in these articles is to enter into the invisible realm of human existence: the realm of the *inward man*. This is the realm of the soul, and within that realm is a power and an existence of which man has been unable to fully fathom its potential, its capabilities, and its power of control. It is this realm of human existence that God made for Himself, a realm capable of God's Spirit entering even to the point of controlling and experiencing the power of His presence (which is beyond this world) into heavenly places.

We may wonder what realms did the mind experience before man fell into sin? What did the will experience, and what was the experience of emotions and thoughts of God within man? We cannot even conceive of the realms the mind and thought could have known in an unfallen state and with the mind in communion with its Creator.

But the Fall did take place, and in a moment of time the power of the sin principle invaded every aspect of man and opened a world of sight and knowledge that was not for man to know. Man now discerned that he had the capability of thinking beyond God, beyond truth, and beyond righteousness. The vastness of his creation now entered into a different realm of existence, a fallen world, the world of

spirits and beings that had made the same choice to rebel against its Creator as man had now made.

Oh, if man had remained in obedience to God, what realms of thought would he have known and experienced in the spiritual? But we will never know what "could have been" had man remained true to God. Yet, from Genesis 3 the Scriptures unfold the history of man in a fallen condition. Biblical history reveals a thought life in man that was capable of inspiring actions against God and against what He intended for the mind to be and to think. We are introduced to imagination, an invisible mental capability of taking thoughts and creating a world alienated from God into a realm of darkness that can invent actions against God and against mankind. So many realms man would have known had he not fallen: realms of purity, holiness, perfection, beauty, love, and of God Himself. Instead man was introduced to a world of hurt, grief, trouble, despair, breakup of the family, and almost an annihilation of life.

The Fall and its thought life also brought the destruction of the physical body of Abel in the fratricide by Cain. Within these events prompted by sin, we witness imagination, the fruition of thoughts, and from imagination we witness those thoughts in human actions. Such a reality revealed new experiences for the human body that led in Genesis 6 to great immoralities and violence. We read, "And God saw

that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). By this time the power of the sin principle was profoundly affecting the mind. Experimentation of the thought life in imagination birthed deeper actions that began to destroy mankind. Sin was destroying the inward man that God had made; man had come to believe he was only "flesh" (Gen. 6:3). His thoughts were consumed only with the body, the flesh. There was no soul, no ability to know God; all of man's actions flowed from the profound corruption of a perverse mind. We are told that after the Flood, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21b). Though the Lord destroyed most of mankind, He chose to preserve humanity through Noah, who "found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Gen. 6:8), and his family. He was the last of humanity at the time of the Flood preserving the godly line; he was a "just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9).

The Dark Powers of Imagination Deepened

Though God began another history of humanity through Noah, the sin principle was not destroyed in the Flood. It continued through the seed of mankind. It seems that after the Flood mankind entered and explored another realm of human existence through his inward man. The power of

his will and mind had the ability to contact and interact with the spirit world of darkness: to touch it, to enter it, to explore it, and to mingle man's human powers with the spirit powers of another existence. One hundred ten years after the Flood, two men, a father and son named Cush and Nimrod, left the family of Noah (Genesis 11) and journeyed from the east, where "they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there." When these two men left their relatives (including Noah and the immediate brothers), others chose to leave the godly line (as Cain did in Genesis 4) and went into the land of Shinar. It was in this geography that their imagination entered another realm of thought never known before. They began to embrace the occult world, the conceptualization of other gods and forms of worship heretofore unknown.

By the time we enter the history of Cush and Nimrod and the building of the Tower of Babel, another world is brought into existence for man's thinking, for his imagination, and his realm of experience. Their imaginations now convinced them to believe they could produce a civilization that was capable of reaching heaven, and making a name, a name to take the place of the Jehovah name. This was a realm of thought never investigated or explored since the fall of man. Though fallen angels had imagined these thoughts, man now believed he could be as great as God, to take the place of God:

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do (Gen. 11:5, 6).

God confounded their language, their singular avenue of communication, and “scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city” (Gen. 11:8). How does history interpret this crucial moment? The word *Balal* means “to confuse,” with the word mutating to *Babel*, and then *Babel*—“the gate to God.” The Aramaic language views it as the “Gate to God,” while the Hebrew root meaning reveals it as “confusion.” What the world would view as the “Gate to God” will be seen by God’s people as “confusion.”

The Mutation of Imagination through History

When Abraham is introduced in history, he is delivered from the idolatry that had begun with the imagination of Cush and Nimrod. He and his offspring were taught the ways of God, thus bringing a new perspective of thoughts and imagination. The world was once again divided into another concept of thought and imagination. The hope of another life, another realm of thought existence for living came through this man called Abraham. The rest of the Old Testament

and its unfolding reveals how the mind soared in thoughts of God through unique men such as Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David (in the Psalms), and the preaching and writings of the prophets. But simultaneously, we read of a continual falling away into apostasy. Such a deeper falling away from man’s initial fall furthered his powers of thought into greater darkness, wickedness, and destruction to God’s professing people. Then the New Testament unfolded the coming of Messiah and declared Who He is and why He came to earth. The thoughts of God concerning His Son are infallibly expressed in these writings.

In the providence of God, the rich unfolding of Church history brings us to the Protestant Reformation. Such a movement throughout much of Europe brought both the heart and mind of man into the precious vestibule of God, His Son, and the Word of God, the Bible. The intricate influence of the Reformation profoundly affected almost every aspect of human society in Western civilization. But there came a reaction to the objective revelation of God during the Enlightenment. Man’s rejection of God, His Son’s work on the cross, and the infallibility of the Bible, brought a violent reaction in the minds of men which drove them deeper into a spiritual and mental chasm of existence in their imaginations. From the days of the metaphysical philosophers of Greece, the noblest thinking of man was at least in the

realm of sound reason, truth, and absolutes. It was the belief that next to the revelation of God's Word, "reason was the best raft" to get man through his generation. Such reason was based on absolutes.

The Protestant Reformation brought into this public arena the belief that the absolutes based upon the inerrant Word of God, the full and complete revelation from God to man, were infinitely higher than human reasoning. However, by 1600, in the rejection of the Scriptures by the men of the growing Enlightenment, man believed his mind was equal to, if not greater than, the Bible. Once this presupposition was accepted, other concepts of reason were experimented with. Yet, up to this point in history, absolutes and natural truth were the most lauded.

The spirit and mood of the Enlightenment drew the inquisitive minds of certain men further away from God and His Word, producing exploration of the mind into other realms of reasoning that took their imaginations totally away from God and sound, sensible thinking. The German philosopher Georg Hegel (1770–1831) began to experiment with altering the thought principle through what he called *dialecticism*. His mind concept toyed with reasoning that opposites in thought could be brought together, that the reasoning mind could force a thesis and an antithesis to both be accepted as humanly true. However, the mind was forced to be re-calibrated,

reeducated, reinterpreted, because this form of reason was not native or natural to the mind. This needed reeducation took place in the realm of imagination; reason and thought were drawn further away not only from sound thinking but also from God and the conceptual way He made the mind. The thesis of life was now joined with its antithesis, creating a synthesis of thought. In so doing, a mindset based on absolutes was made void. There were to be no absolutes, no right or wrong. Everything was to be viewed in a relative context.

Hegel's dialecticism paved the way for another man to draw the power of the mindset further away from God and Truth. Soren Kierkegaard believed the mind and its thought process could be readjusted and realigned in order that it may create its own truth. Man could create a world where "his personal truth" could exist and possibly be lived by. Such a world might not be the realm of former reality and absolutes, but man's thinking could be trained to believe in a make-believe world, a fantasy world.

In the early stages of this concept, assistance was sought through the avenues of drugs, alcohol, or some form of mind-altering means. This became the transitional philosophy to break down the mind into mindless thinking and to create by thoughts and imagination its own new truth. The world of reality could be created within one's self with no need of proof or compari-

son to anyone else's thinking or conception of reality. Truth, reality, and desired existence were now to be known singularly in man's mind and imagination, and no one was permitted to declare any difference of opinion as to the right or the wrong of the thought-conjured truths. The latter part of the twentieth century termed this method of thinking for society as *Postmodernism*. This has now become the new wave of thought and imagination; man creates his own truth and his own existence. No revelation from God can attack it or denounce it. Man not only is the measure of all things but also becomes his own god; what he says or wills becomes the truth for him.

"Virtual Reality" versus Reality

We have come to a time when the foundation of all truth rests upon the abstractions of an individual's personal opinions. This pluralistic society in which we are forced to live demands that we accept all of humanity's thoughts and imaginations. Everyone's opinion of life and of self must be accepted as true (unless it condemns another person's perspective, such as the Christian's belief in absolutes). A world created by an individual's thought life (in which he is convinced it is reality to him) can never be questioned. All are forced to accept what an individual says about his gender, his preferences, and his lifestyle.

Technology and the medical world have now become an enabling for the

dregs and scum of society to live openly by the way they think. Such advancements in both areas of science have enhanced the ability to make the imagination real, at least for a time. Technology is able to provide a "virtual" reality for man to explore his vain imaginations. And what does such a term mean? Virtual reality means "being something in essence or effect, though not actually or in fact." This word *virtual* has been used in the computer sense of "not physically existing but made to appear." Virtual reality (VR) is a simulated experience that employs "3D near-eye display to give the user an immersive feel of a virtual world." It is a companion to the imagination of the mind, to the whole of man's feeling and sensing the simulation of that reality.

We have noted this technology for several decades in personal video games, simulated amusement park rides, and the sights and sounds of general entertainment. They all have added to the artificial enticement (for a brief season of time) of our sensory perception and stimulation. Could the mind become so controlled and even empowered by such technological powers enabling the mind to live in imagination, even though what is imagined is not real?

In the 1980s, the virtual reality game *Dungeons and Dragons* (D&D) quickly became popular. Similar other elaborate fantasy role-playing (FRP) games also came on the market. These offered a new imaginative frontier for

the earnest mind to explore. These games became one of the hottest pastimes in our nation, especially among teenagers and college students. Millions of game sets were sold and continue to be sold. Without going into the details of *Dungeons and Dragons*, it is a game that becomes an elaborate fantasy game played out in one's mind using skill and creative imagination. With no game board, no cards, and no strict rules, the players are given a set of dice and general guidelines. There are no limitations on time since fantasy role-playing games are not single-experience contests; they are ongoing adventures or campaigns traversing from one episode to another. In theory a single game could last a lifetime. Because of the excitement involved and the ease in which players may get hooked on fantasy role playing, it draws the participant deeper and deeper into the next realm of imagination. There are no absolutes, no boundaries, no morals, no good or evil. The participant can do anything he can imagine, and it will not be viewed as right or wrong.

Another insight into the character of the game is the terminology used; it is a world of the occult, of gnomes, wizards, and assassins. Once again, because of the excitement involved in its fantasy, players usually will not notice subtle changes that may be occurring in their lives, their moods, and their spirits as a result of playing the games. In such games the best approach in playing is to be evil since there are

more advantages in the playing of that role. Note one player's testimony:

I am the dungeon master 98% of the time. I am the God of my world, the creator who manipulates the gods and humans.... When I'm in my world, I control my own world order.... [But] the more I play *D&D*, the more I want to get away from this world. The whole thing is getting very bad.†

When it comes to theology in the fantasy role play, the Christian cannot be a part of this imaginative world. It is a make-believe world, contrary to reality, and such games present a polytheistic perspective of gods rather than a monotheistic universe. It is the belief in many gods rather than the one true God. Nor is the theology of such games Christian.

Perhaps the greatest area of concern in modern FRP games concerns the heavy use of the occult. Games may include such fantasy pastimes as magic and the casting of spells, protective inscriptions, astral projection, attempts to communicate with the dead, conjuring and summoning of false deities and demons, the use of psychic powers, and in some games even occult alignment with demons or gods. When one enters into *AD&D* (*Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*) all player characters are to have a patron god.

How sad to note that to date, thousands of deaths, murders, suicides, and other problems have been associ-

ated directly or indirectly with *Dungeons & Dragons* and other FRP games. Ultimately, the mind could enter a realm of fantasy that it believes to be the real world of human existence. The final power of the mind in this avenue of existence is to alter the very consciousness of who we are and what we are.

Conclusion

How far can the mind go in imagination? To what extent will be its exploration, and then, to what depth can it lay hold of what it sees? Eventually, in such an imagination without God in the thoughts, where does truth begin and where does it end? When does the mind cease to lay hold of truth and then enter a world of perpetual error? When does good conclude its influence in thought and evil begin the weaving of its warp and woof? God intended for the mind to be controlled by truth, by His Word and Spirit. The Bible declares, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD" (Isa. 55:8). But is it possible for the thoughts of God to become our thoughts, His ways to become our ways? Though man fell into sin and has been on a course of progressive destruction to this very hour, he can know a change in life through Christ that brings a change of mind. This change of mind is called repentance, a change in how we think and how we imagine truth and true reality. God's Word and Spirit can place the

thoughts of God into our mind that could become our very controlling thoughts and imagination.

Such thoughts of God controlling the life can produce, through grace, the "ways" of God in our living:

Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways (Ps. 119:1-3).

Then the Psalmist reveals what will bring this blessing to the mind and heart: "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways" (119:15). When the Word of God so envelopes our mind and its thinking, God's ways will become our ways, and we will have respect in heart and living unto those ways. This is what contributed to David's being "a man after God's own heart."

May the Lord bring salvation to our mind and thought life in a day when the wickedness, the violence, and the dark immoralities all have become the commentary of humanity. What human society has become in this perilous hour is the sad product of its thinking and its imagination. **[S]**

†Moirra Johnston, "It's Only a Game—Or Is It?", *New West* (August 25, 1980): 38.

A Prayer for the Coming Days

Dear Lord, what will the days ahead
Unveil with startling sight?
How great will violence be spread,
And wrong suppress the right?

We see no hope to rise from earth,
For man is filled with sin.
And melancholy destroys mirth;
Sin's darkness destroys men.

False shepherds are the fools who lead
With folly in control!
The lawlessness of sin exceeds,
It now takes global toll!

We cry, Oh God, for Thee to send
Thy Son in all His pow'r
To judge in truth! Thy Word defend,
In this dark, crucial hour!

—H. T. Spence

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God's Protection for the Mind

Dr. H. T. Spence

The older I get, being an observer of both the age and myself, it seems that the most powerful entity we possess is our mind. The mind is the constant, natural voice that is a controlling factor of what we say and do. As noted in these articles, over a process of time, without the guardianship of God and His Word, the mind potentially can enter into overpowering realms of darkness. Such realms of depression and despair can eventually lead to a world where the "kingdom of darkness" is the lord over our thoughts and imaginations. Our thoughts can potentially cause us to drift away from God; step by step we can enter a mental land where the quagmire of thoughts could possibly open the floodgates of demonic powers to come within. Even our emotions are controlled by the thoughts of the mind. Then there is the realm of the mind affecting the body.

The Powers of the Mind over the Body

In the 1800s, psychology and psychiatry were born in the womb of evolution. The secularists took the term for soul, *pseuche*, and divorced it from theology, placing it in a new "science" called *psychology*. This action destroyed its original meaning as well as identification with theology. This redefining placed the study of the soul outside the spiritual context. The soul became associated singularly with the

mind, and the mind is now viewed as merely part of the physical body. One of the terms that emerged in the genre of psychology was *psychosomatic*. It is defined as the ability of the mind and thought to affect the body. It is the ability of the mind to convince us that we have a problem in the *soma* (the body). However, the problem really is our thoughts about the body; there is no real physical problem. Physical pain and suffering can arise from a wrong thought life. Oh, how powerful the mind can be in its thoughts about the body; it literally can think pain into existence! We must be careful about what we think concerning a physical problem; the mind could create its own symptoms not truly related to the physical problem. Thought can create an apparent reality that does not exist!

God and the Mind of Man

The Bible reveals the Creator's blueprint of the mind, how it functions, and the way we are to properly think once we become a Christian. It even reveals how we are to control the mind. If we do not come to this knowledge from God's Word, we become a slave to our runaway thoughts. In the light of our thoughts, let us first consider what God had to do when He came to us and changed our thought life. Then, let us consider what we must do to maintain our thought life from return-

ing to its past paths and power over us.

How was our mind before God came to us? In Ephesians 2, the apostle Paul speaks of the course (the “age”) of this world. He reveals that the age had a profound effect on us: “Among whom also we all had our conversation [manner of living] in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (v. 3). Oh, the accumulated mess that God had to wade through to even reach us in our thinking! Truly, the New Birth is the greatest miracle that has happened to us. Apart from the enabling power of God, it would have been impossible for us even to come to Him. Indeed, we “walked” according to the “course” of the world system (our contemporary age), which is controlled by the Devil, the god of this world (this age’s system). The Devil (the prince power of the air) was working in us, as he continually does in all children of disobedience. We observe from this passage two things. First, we were a product of this age. Second, this age shaped our thinking. We literally inhaled into our souls, our minds, our emotions, and our wills the outflowings of thought from an age that “lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19).

In addition to the powerful influence of this age, we were strongly influenced by the Devil himself. Second Corinthians 4:4 reveals that the Devil was able to manipulate and control our minds as unbelievers, empowering our rejection of God in unbelief. Paul

declares in 2 Corinthians 4:3, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” And why is the Gospel hidden? Because we walked according to the present influential generation of this world, and the god of this world fed into our minds thoughts of blindness concerning the Gospel. The Devil constantly threw lying thoughts into our minds against the Gospel, “lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” Across the vastness of the world, the Devil in his unique, dark power is literally maintaining this “not believing.” He aids and abets the thoughts of men, constantly slander-ing God, truth, and righteousness. While the Devil cannot read a person’s mind, he can throw fiery darts of doubt and unbelief into the minds of humanity.

With great clarity Ephesians 2:2 sets forth the two controlling powers of the sinner: the power of the age in which he lives, and the power of the prince of the air working in the children of disobedience. And what is that working? It is a working within the mind and the very thought life of the individual. A life lived is the product of thoughts, including the prompting to fulfill the intense desires of the flesh and of the mind. Therefore, the mind was an integral part of my sinning, and it became the inspiration naturally to perpetuate sin in my life.

Colossians 1:21 also unveils what our lives were before the Lord found us:

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled." We were enemies in our mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled us unto Himself! What was it within us that produced this alienation from God? It was both our mind and how we lived away from God. In Romans 8:7, the problem in the carnal believer is that the mind still may be an enemy to the things of God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Immediately after a person becomes a Christian, an awareness will arise concerning his mind and his thoughts. The mind's propensity is fleshly, carnal, and often away from God. The Christian knows his sins are forgiven; but there is another governing principle, alongside of Christ, that seems to be present within. Thoughts arise at times that seem to hate God, a drawing within to the old way, the old man, and the old thought life. Paul declares this to be the carnal mind, the fleshly mind; and such a mind cannot be brought under the law of God.

God, after forgiving the believer of his sins, now calls for the Christian to give Him his total life. More specifically, God wants the entirety of the heart. What is the heart? It is the fountain of the human being's existence. It is the root of the Christian's very being. It is the core of his inner man. It is here that the sin principle resides. It is here that his mind is constantly feeding the

heart. This is where the old man is located. The old man is not located in the mind or the will of the Christian per se; this old man, the sin principle, is located in the spiritual heart of the soul. And when Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit comes into the life of the believer, it is within the spiritual heart that He comes. Yes, right in the mixture of the mess of one's life the Saviour makes His dwelling. For this is what He wants to lay hold of. But how does God get to the heart? He cannot simply invade the heart. Everything that comes into the heart must come through the mind. The Lord must come through the avenue of the thoughts. He first talks to us, sending conviction; He sends the voice of the Holy Spirit to speak to us about our life and living. Through this conviction to the mind, He speaks to our hearts, our consciences. Through thoughts of conviction, thoughts prompted by His Word (in preaching or through a witness), the individual will either listen to this conviction or reject it.

Yet, while this thought process is taking place, the Devil knows what is happening. He will try through projected thoughts to combat the thoughts that God is sending. And that adversary of our soul the Devil will do all he can to cause us to believe not, to mistrust what God is saying. He will try to cause us to question or doubt that Word. So, the avenue of the mind is where it all begins: both the conviction from God and the doubting

thoughts from the Devil. This is also true concerning all forms of temptation to disobey God; the only way a temptation can come to the Christian is through the mind, the thoughts. Though, according to James 1:14, temptation comes from the enticement of a desire within, the temptation cannot come to us without going through the avenue of thoughts. There may be the ear gate in hearing or the eye gate in seeing, but it must be immediately transformed into thoughts to enter the heart.

Remember, God desires to take full possession of the heart! To reach it He must deal with the mind. This dealing seeks to bring one to "repentance." We are not born again first. We first must experience repentance; we must be introduced to the gift of *metanoia*. This word is a combination of two Greek words: *meta* ["to change"] and *noia* ["mind"]. Although the word for mind is *nous*, *noia* is the "process of the thinking in my mind." Thus, God must somehow deal with the mind through which all of my thinking takes place. Before coming to God, how did we think about God? How did we think about sin? How did we think about our past in sin? Did we view ourselves as sinners, without God, without hope? Our thinking must somehow be changed, and only God can grant repentance (Acts 11:18).

Repentance is a miracle! How can the *process of our thinking* radically change in a moment of time? God must grant

it! Although in a moment of time God can grant this repentance, He will not repent for us. We either will willfully lay hold of the gift and repent, or will reject the gift and not repent. Once a change has come in the way we have been thinking, then the Holy Spirit through that change comes into the heart and births the Christ within.

Once Christ has entered the heart through repentance and believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, what happens to the principle of 2 Corinthians 4:4? This passage is certainly dealing with the unbeliever. But what effect does the Devil now have upon the Christian and his thinking?

The Christian and His Mind

Through the New Birth salvation has come to the believer, the Christian, including his mind. Does the Devil leave the believer alone? No, the Devil now changes tactics. His ploy is to stagnate that Christian's heart to keep it in carnality (the carnal mind). To achieve this, he calls upon a mighty weapon from his arsenal that has been a tried and proved weapon: *deception*. To the sinner, his ploy is to create doubt, denial, and questioning. But once we have accepted Christ as our Saviour, and once Christ has come into the life, and once salvation comes to the mind, we have a *sound* mind (2 Tim. 1:7), a *saved* mind. Satan's strategy now is to create deception, not doubt!

Knowing this biblical principle, the Christian must come to see the great

importance of *meditation*. Meditation truly is an integral part of the protection for our saved minds. Meditation is the maintaining of God's Word within the mind; it is a constancy that must be a present tense reality throughout the life. I cannot permit my mind to be by itself for a long period of time. If I do, my mind could be profoundly influenced from many directions. Meditation is not only for the maintenance of communion and fellowship with God but also is imperatively needed to protect my mind from the constant bombardment of the Devil's deceptive thoughts. Once repentance has come to change the process of my thinking, I now must lay hold of the protective power of God's Word in the constancy of meditation; I must maintain the change of mind that has come to me.

One of the concerns Christians face in the End Time is lukewarmness. This concern is true not only for the living of the Christian life but also for the thought life of the mind. We live in the worst generation for keeping a consistent biblical thought life. Seventy-five or one hundred years ago, even those who did not attend college or even finish high school had greater capacities for natural, morally sound thinking than our generation.

In contrast, today insanity saturates our politics; there are no statesmen in the present government. The elite leaders of our country are incompetent; their lifestyle is found among the

scum of the bottom of humanity. There is no sound thinking. Such human beings are the products of an insane hour, controlled by insane thinking. And this is the way leadership will continue until the time of the coming of Antichrist. Such a man will be the product of this insanity; yea, he will be the embodiment of the thoughts of the Devil in human form.

The Mind Must Love God

With all the technology and science at our disposal, our generation has produced a society that dwells in another dimension of thinking. Our society increasingly grows in passivity of thinking. A passive mind is what opens the door to all kinds of powers easily entering the thought life. The Christian cannot afford to have a passive mind; it will destroy his walk with God.

Note Ezekiel 11:5:

And the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the LORD; Thus have ye said, O house of Israel: for I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.

As a Christian, I must ever be conscious of this fact that God knows every thought that enters my mind. Psalm 139 declares that God knows my thoughts even before I think them; yea, He knew our thoughts from the foundation of the world! What words we read at the end of this psalm: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (139:23, 24). As Christians, we must have a consciousness and sensitivity that our thoughts are ever before the Lord. We must pray for the cleansing of our mind as well as the cleansing of our heart. As we have noted, God knows every thought that we have; so, what is the pleading of Scripture concerning this?

There is first the Great Commandment, which is the superlative command that we must live by. It is the definition of *Christian perfection*. The great commandment is a singular declaration covering everything we will ever face in life. Oh, if we would only keep clear our understanding of our relationship with God in this great commandment, it would prove to be of immense benefit to us. And what is the great commandment? We have read that the mind (the carnal mind) of the Christian is at enmity (or hatred) with God. Remember that God placed this hatred between the good seed and the bad seed of humanity all the way back in Genesis 3:15—God placed the hatred between the godly and ungodly. It was to be a protection for us by maintaining a separation in our living. It will be tied into what we hate and what we love! We must hate the world, even in our thinking, but we must love God.

But what is this great commandment?

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God
is one LORD: And thou shalt love

the LORD thy God with all thine
heart, and with all thy soul, and
with all thy might (Deut. 6:4, 5).

In Matthew 22:37, when Jesus answered the lawyer's question of what "is the great commandment in the Law?" Jesus answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment." As a Christian I must find in Christ the fulfilling power of this great commandment. This commandment is tied up in loving God with everything that is within me. Endeavoring to keep this commandment will be my protection in this wicked and evil world in which we live. Because God is a Spirit, the word *body* is not mentioned in the Great Commandment. The Commandment calls upon us to love God with everything of the *inward man*. It begins with loving God "with all thy heart." It starts at the root. It then proceeds to the soul, which encompasses everything of that inward man. But then it turns to my might, which is the manifestation of the inward man in all that I do. And finally Christ included the "mind." My mind is to be the manifestation of love to God in my thought life. I prove my love to God by what I think upon, the meditations of heart and mind. My mind cannot be given to passivity, wandering thoughts, apathetic thoughts, indifferent thoughts. Love must be active from each of these spheres of the inner man.

Warnings to Gird Up the Mind

The apostle Peter gives us a warning in his first epistle (1:13) that becomes an important need at this crucial hour in history: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." This passage reveals an insight concerning the mind's power, which demands the need of "girding up the loins of the mind." There must be a sobriety to the mind, a saneness in its thinking; it is to be serious about itself and not to be taken lightly. We must not think we can handle this power alone for the mind is capable of flitting and flying in a moment of time. The mind can change course of thought in a moment. Thoughts may race from one to another like the buzzing of many bees swarming around in our head. Thoughts can be projected into the mind so quickly that we may wonder, "Where did that thought come from?" And then there are thoughts projected by the Devil, which come so quickly that they are in the mind before we realize it.

Therefore, this passage in Peter's first epistle reveals that the mind is capable of being girded up. The mind has a concept of loins (the center strength of that mind) that must be girded up. The Christian must learn to tighten up the thoughts. The mind cannot be permitted to simply be loose and free to go into any realm of thinking. There must ever be a maintenance, or a tightening

of the mind in what it is permitted to think upon. The mind cannot be like it was before it came to Christ. The apostle Paul brings forth another principle in 2 Corinthians 10:5 concerning this girding up:

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

The Word of God gives us several warnings concerning the principle of controlling the mind. Consider the fall of King Solomon who was wrapped in the environment of God in worship. What happened to this wise king? It seems that he lost, yea, he forfeited his sensitivity toward God. We are shown in his Book of Ecclesiastes the trains of thought he took away from God. When it comes to our thoughts about God, we must take them seriously. No matter how long we have been a Christian, we can never lose a sensitivity concerning God, His Word, and the principles found in that Word. We can never become so accustomed to God that we take Him or His Word for granted. We must take His warnings seriously; yes, we must be sober about our thoughts of God and His Word. As Peter continues: "Be sober and hope to the end," to the end of our days, or until the coming of Christ! We must never relax in this "girding up" of the loins of our mind!

For the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation [or the public unveiling] of Jesus Christ;

As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance (1 Pet. 1:13, 14).

In our past living we were ignorant of those former lusts and their power of devastation against us. Therefore, we must ever be girding up our thoughts, being sober!

Safeguards for the Christian Mind

In Romans 12 the apostle Paul brings us to the apex of the Christian life, the life to which justification by faith (chapters 4 and 5), sanctification (chapters 6 and 7), and the infilling of the Spirit (chapter 8) have been the mercies bringing us to the great truth of the chapter. Entering Romans 12, we now read why the Lord wanted to bring us through all of these workings of grace. It was to bring us to the apex of living the Christian life: *consecration*. Paul declares,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies [your full human nature and body, which have now been delivered from the power and propensity to sin] a living sacrifice.

The workings of sanctification are to be a precious part of this sacrifice, which is holy, acceptable to God, and which becomes the reasonable service of the Christian life. This is the normality of Christian living, the reasonable service. But Paul goes on to state,

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by

the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

This word *conformed* is the Greek word *sunskseima*. Paul now reveals that the Christian must no longer look to the world and imitate it. This is what brought Neo-Christianity into existence. Neo-Christianity continues to look at the world and conform to it, rather than looking to Christ and being conformed to Him (Rom. 8:29). Modern Christianity lives like the world, dresses like the world, acts like the world, and attends the places of the world. This is becoming more and more the commentary of Christian colleges and the vast majority of churches. At one time in some of these "Christian" schools, there may have been a greater sensitivity to God and the truths of His Word. But conservative Christianity has been so absorbed in minding the world that it has become the world with a Christian label. Their countenances, their dress standards, their music, their conversations, their generic preaching all give witness to the falling away of the heart and the enlarging of the thought life to include the world. Paul warns the Christian that instead of imitating the world (the age), let us be transformed by the present tense continual renewing of our mind.

Dear reader, this is going to be a key part of keeping the mind! The mind must (in the present tense) continually be renewed. It must be renewed be-

cause there is ever the danger of the mind becoming stagnant. And a stagnant mind tends to possess truth without power. Yes, we could have the truth, but that truth may not have the power within us as it did in the past (2 Tim. 3:5). This lukewarmness can happen in the best of churches. The truth in a creed and on a website could be held in sterility while the power of that truth is absent in the life. We know the doctrine, the outward form; but our lives could be denying the power of the truth in our living. We may have the truth of the doctrine in our mind, but are we sensitive to the living of that truth?

What is now an imperative need? The need is for our mind, yea, our thinking to be constantly renewed! But what is the renewing of the mind? It is the constant renewing of the mind in the faith of the Word of God so that you may be able to prove, or continue to prove (present tense), what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. This passage reveals that something must be daily happening in my mind and heart. The mind must constantly be renewed in its thinking and meditation accompanied by the Holy Spirit.

This renewal happens through meditation. Although we may read the Bible, we must also be meditating throughout the day on that Word. It must become a part of our thinking. If we are not careful, what we have in memory may be stale manna, or

manna breeding worms. What a thought! Truth could breed worms of destruction if it is not kept fresh in the mind and heart. This is why there must be constant renewing of the mind in Christ for that manna of His Word ever to be fresh within. It is the manna kept in the golden pot in the ark of the covenant, in the Holy of Holies, which becomes a type of the fullness of the Spirit ever witnessing in the Christian life.

Another principle steps forward in the New Testament calling us to protection of the mind. Note 1 Peter 4:1, 2:

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

What do these verses reveal to us? Again, it is coming back to a mindset. The mind must be set in a certain perspective of thinking. We are told that Christ suffered for us in the flesh (this was His crucifixion). Then, Peter calls upon the Christian to “arm yourselves likewise with the same mind,” or the thinking that Christ had when He went to the cross. When this crucifixion is known in the Christian life, “he that suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.” The Christian knowing Christ’s cross and crucifixion in his own life will cease from the principle of sin controlling his life and mind.

This “ceasing from sin” is *not* referring to Christ, for Christ never knew sin to cease from. “For he . . . hath ceased from sin [from the principle of sin]; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh [the physical body] to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.” Christ went to the cross with a certain mindset. Christ was willing to go to that cross and did not view it as a shame against Himself. If I too have this mind (the true thought perspective of the Romans 6 crucifixion), it will be a protection to the mind. It is the crucified life in Christ.

Yet we read in Philippians 2:5 another view of this crucifixion. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Let this process of thinking that was in Christ be in us. This is the way Christ thought about Himself in the light of His humiliation in coming to earth to do the will of His Father, which included the cross. How does the Christian think about crucifixion? Do we think it to be a protective need for our lives, including our crucifixion of the world, to the desires of the world, and to the will of the world? What do we think of humbling ourselves in our submission to Christ, even to the death of the cross?

There is an accompanying principle to be seen in Romans 14:5:

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

What is the principle revealed in this

verse? We must be fully persuaded of that which we say we believe. One person may declare a passage of Scripture and may give a commentary of that passage, and another person may agree to what the other says about it. However, it has no meaning until each individual is fully persuaded in his own mind about that truth. We truly must have conviction on that declared principle of truth. If one personally believes it to be true, the world may try to lay hold of his thinking and endeavor to shake him away from that principle or truth. The Christian must come to a full persuasion in his mind and heart. If that truth is established firmly within his mind and heart, nothing the world brings can shake him away from it. No fear, doubt, darkness, or despair can rob him of its truth. A sanctified mind will help in sealing the mind about that truth. One of the poisonous characteristics of carnality is “doubt.” Carnality of the mind tends to bring doubt and question, but a sanctified mind brings the Christian to a conclusion. It brings him to a rest about that Word.

So, when thoughts are hurled into the mind by the Devil, we are not there to debate him! We need not begin questioning the Word of God. Why? Because we have come to a rest in our thinking about God’s eternal truth for us.

The Danger of a Passive Mind

Beware of passivity taking over the mind. A passive mind is a mind that is

capable of being controlled by something rather than the self. It is when the Christian yields to thoughts that are not of God. As such thoughts “talk” to us, we fail to retaliate; we simply yield to the thoughts.

Thus far we have seen what will keep us from a passive mind. But once a passive mind begins its invasion, there will be insightful characteristics that reveal that passive mind within. Note 2 Timothy 4:3, 4:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

One of the signs that a passive mind is taking over the Christian mind is when the Christian leaves the “active voice” to make intentional decisions. All of a sudden, the individual goes so far in those decisions that it places him in a context in which another power takes control of him, and there is nothing he can do about it. We see this characteristic in this passage of 2 Timothy. In a previous passage (1 Tim. 4:1) Paul stated, “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times [or the last days] some shall depart from the faith.” How will they depart from the faith? It will be a departure as a result of “giving heed to seducing spirits.” How this takes place will be through the thoughts of the

mind. How often the Christian has permitted thoughts coming from demons or the Devil to be cast into his mind. The Christian then takes heed to those thoughts and doctrines; the demons now teach the individual how to live and what to think. This influence will increase more and more in the End Time. The Christian must be ready to resist these thoughts. If he does not resist such thoughts, the kingdom of darkness will oppress and control the mood and spirit of his thinking.

But what are signs of a passive mind? The first sign is when certain thoughts come into the mind that the individual cannot seem to do anything about. He cannot stop such thoughts; there seems to be no power in the will to stop them. Once these thoughts are able to make inroads into the mind and are not resisted, they will intensify through the continued manipulation by the prince of darkness and his advocates. Over a period of time, with the mind permitting these thoughts to continue, the individual will enter a realm where they no longer can be controlled in the mind. It is one thing for thoughts to be given to us, but it is another thing when we will not do anything about controlling them. We must resist the Devil’s thoughts to us. That resistance will be in the mind through prayer and refusing to yield to those thoughts. The mind is now entering passivity when it does nothing about such thoughts against God and against the individual’s life in Him.

A second sign of a passive mind is the constant and unstoppable flow of pictures or images upon the mind. It is one thing to "fight" against the images by crying out to God. But a passive mind will not prohibit them from residing in the mind. They now control the imagination, and the individual seems not to have the power to stop the visual images within the mind. We are not stating that in receiving such images upon the mind we are in sin; however, great problems arise when we no longer cry out to God to help us resist these images taking up residence in our thought life. The Christian must pray, seek the Lord, cry out to heaven for the deliverance. When the mind becomes passive to these images, they will flourish in the mind and they will increase.

A student or child could become passive in learning. Sometimes we meet a child who is unable to concentrate. His mind is bombarded with all kinds of thoughts, and because of this he is unable to concentrate when being taught. This is part of the biblical definition of double-mindedness. The child does not have the ability to concentrate on that which is given to his mind. There is a reason: the child has been permitted to go so long in his life without the discipline of the mind. His attention has never been arrested; his mind wanders here and there. He rarely looks at the parent or the teacher when spoken to. This leads to a mind given to vacillation. This may also be

seen in adults who cannot concentrate.

Another subtle sign of a passive mind is found in individuals who are overly talkative in order to keep a conversation going. When something is said to them, they are not listening. Or when prayer is given by another individual, the mind is constantly wandering. Prayer concentrates thoughts. Can we keep our mind on prayer? Sometimes we may be so tired, we will have to help ourselves in concentration: either by standing up or praying audibly rather than silently in the mind. But if there is lack of concentration in prayer, most of the time it is a sign of a passive mind. For example, after prayer, do we immediately enter into conversations of the secular? Where did the spirit of prayer go? There are many fast talkers, but must they be talking all the time? Certain individuals may control the conversation, but their minds may not be listening when others speak. This may be a sign of a passive mind. There is a torrent of words without thinking, without choosing, without maintaining the stability of the conversation.

Obstinacy is another sign of a passive mind. Obstinacy is a refusal to listen. This can be true of children and teenagers towards their parents. How often decisions are made to leave a good Christian home, and church, and the things of God. And once the mind is set, they will not listen. Even when God is calling to the individual, obsti-

nacy of heart can cause the mind to become passive. He just refuses to listen to the Lord or to those who are being used by God to call him back to the right path. Stubbornness of heart can lead to a passive mind in listening to God.

A final sign of a passive mind is worklessness. Just as a person can get lazy and have no longer a desire to work (and this is becoming a prominent characteristic in society today), a person can enter a mental laziness in which they no longer “work” the mind. They do not keep the mind active with the right thoughts. Because of this the mind could enter into a lull. Dear Christian, keep your mind active in prayer, in Bible reading, in conversations with God’s people, and in your own thought life of meditation. Keep your mind active in the thoughts that will cultivate your life in God.

Conclusion

In these days the Christian must be careful to guard and protect his mind. This will become more important as the age is given over to the Lie, and we

no longer know who or what to trust. The Devil is working at a greater pace to claim as many of God’s people back to his camp as he can. He has had six thousand years to experiment with humanity, and he is at his greatest hour in reclaiming his own. Fewer are ready for Christ’s coming today than fifty years ago. Truly the Devil is hunting for the precious life. We must be careful in our thought life. Some right thought must be controlling our minds at every given moment. Otherwise, we will be given over to laziness; whatever comes into the mind will become the controller. The Devil will send thoughts, and at times shocking thoughts. But these sent thoughts are not my thoughts *until* my will unites with them. Therefore, I must stand as a sentinel, guarding and protecting my mind, waging a war against any stronghold that rises against my Lord and against my thoughts away from Him. The mind (as a gateway to the heart) is where we face the battle with the Devil. Whoever controls the mind will eventually control the heart. May the Lord help us in this crucial hour—in the battle for the mind! **S**

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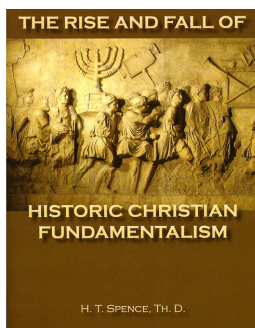
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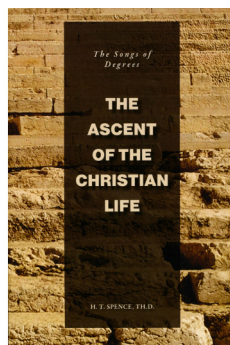
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Living in a Strange Land

H. T. Spence

O glorious redemption; Christ purchased my soul!
I stand in salvation; His grace doth control!
This world, once my living; this world, once my home!
But now, God is making His land my new home!

*I'm living in vict'ry, no more **of** the world!*
*I'm living in vict'ry, though still **in** the world!*
*A stranger in **this** world, while this world's so strange!*
But, I'm in God's new world, He wrought my great change!

The world views my living as strange to its own.
For Christ is my lifespring; I, this world disown!
Its culture is quelling the conscience within!
Its strangers endowing man's power to sin!

So strange is this strange land where Satan is god!
It's founded on quicksand; illusion, its sod!
It's filled with dark teachings, deception, its voice!
And strange is its preachings; its lies are man's choice!

Thank God, I'm delivered from this world's dark pow'r!
Its evil and deathbed no longer devour!
Yet, God does His strange work amidst this strange land!
True paradox working His marvelous plan!

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