

# UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

## Developing a Biblical Worldview

### *How a Biblical Worldview Impacts the Way We View the Human Mind and the Nature of Man*

Introduction: After the blessings of our Missions Conference, we resume the sermon series on developing a Biblical worldview. The focus of this sermon will be on the discipline of psychology: the study of the soul of Man.

- I. Psychology—the Study of the Soul and the Nature of Man
  - A. Psychology, literally translated, means the study of the human soul. The dictionary defines it as the science of the mind and man’s behavior. The basic purpose is to understand the nature of Man.
  - B. The Bible supports the ontological concept that man has a dualistic nature:
    1. Man has a physical reality: his body
    2. Man has a spiritual reality: his soul
  - C. The Trichotomy of Man: body, soul, and spirit (I Thessalonians 5: 23)
- II. The Secular Humanist Psychological Worldview
  - A. Since there is no supernatural, the mind (i.e., the brain) and the body exist as part of the same physical entity.
  - B. Since humans are a by-product of evolution, secular psychologists are left with the study of only material things: the brain, environment stimuli, and how humans respond and behave with respect to this stimuli.
  - C. The three false assumptions of secular psychologists:
    1. We are good by nature and therefore perfectible.
    2. Society and its social institutions are responsible for the evil we do.
    3. Mental health can be restored by those who get in touch with their inner (good) self.
- III. The Christian Psychology Worldview
  - A. Christian psychology acknowledges the sinfulness of man.
  - B. The Christian position goes on to define mankind’s nature as inherently evil because of the decision to disobey God in the Garden of Eden.
  - C. Since man has rebelled against God, he has real guilt feelings about his sin and must reconcile himself with God or face unsolved mental problems.
  - D. While other schools of psychology must invent fancy terms to explain away the existence of guilt as a result of real sin, Christian psychology deals with the problem at its root.
  - E. The problem of sin and guilt cannot be redefined as a neurosis or a psychological kink or mental illness.
  - F. Christian psychology directs us toward the cross and Christ’s sacrificial death.
  - F. Christian psychology believes that God can use suffering to bring about positive changes in the individual.
  - G. The Christian views that society is a direct result of individual actions rather than the Marxist/Humanist worldview that man is corrupted by societies.

Conclusion: Francis Schaeffer said: “As a Christian, instead of putting myself in practice as the center of the universe, I must do something else. This is not only right, and the failure to do so is not only sin, but it is important for me personally in this life. *I must think after God, and I must will after God.*” [emphasis added]

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.* <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.  
Romans 12:1-2

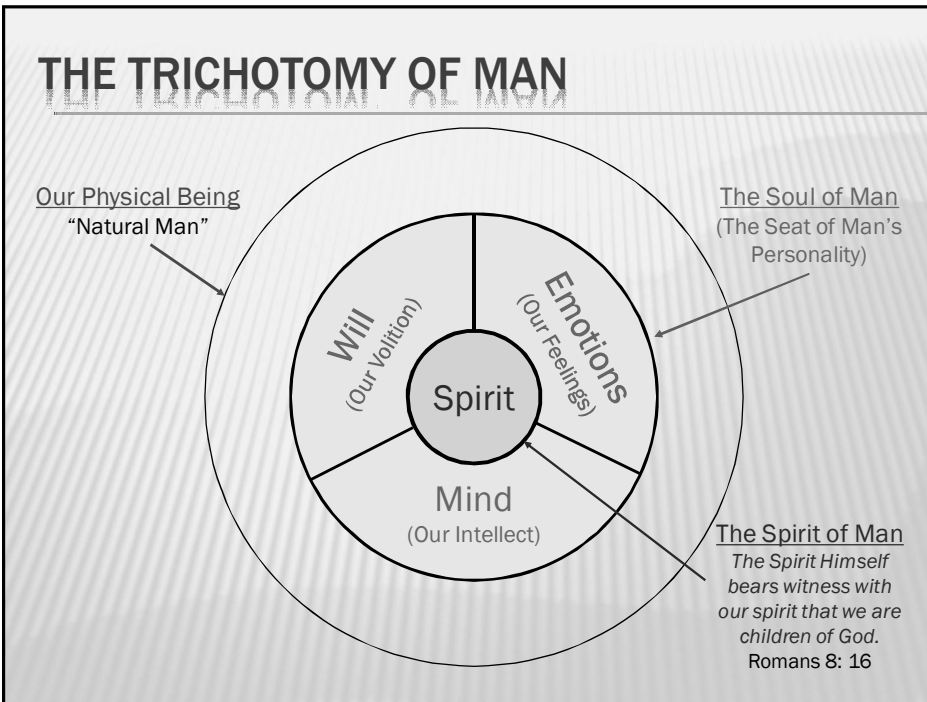
Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
1 Thessalonians 5:23

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every intent of the thoughts ... "  
1 Chronicles 28:9

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.  
Hebrews 4:12

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.) From a Christian standpoint, is it important that we try to understand the nature of man and the human mind? Why or why not?
- 2.) Imagine that you are explaining to a non-believer what you believe about the human mind. Explain in your own words why as a Christian we believe that man has a dualistic nature.
- 3.) Does it seem reasonable and/or logical to view that there are three essential parts to a human being? Explain your reasoning. What aspect of the Trichotomy do you think is most important? Why?
- 4.) What in your mind is the most profound flaw in the Secular Humanist worldview about psychology?
- 5.) What do you think is the foundation truth to Christian psychology? Explain.
- 6.) How would you summarize the Christian psychology worldview on suffering? Are there Scriptures that come to mind to support your view?



**Job 38:36** "Who has put wisdom in the innermost being Or given understanding to the mind?"

**Psalms 51:6** Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.

**Proverbs 20:27** The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the innermost parts of his being.

**John 7:38** "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'"

### NOTES

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## **UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES**

### **DEFINING THE TERM “WORLDVIEW”**

The term *worldview* refers to any ideology, philosophy, theology, movement, or religion that provides *an overarching approach to understanding God, the world, and man’s relation to God and the world.*

David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Religious Worldviews of our Day and the Search for Truth* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1991)

## TEN CATEGORIES THAT MAKE A WORLDVIEW

BIOLOGY	The study of the origin and development of living organisms. <i>What about life?</i>
PSYCHOLOGY	The study of the soul, mind, and spirit. <i>What about human nature?</i>
SOCIOLOGY	The study of social institutions and society. <i>What about society?</i>
POLITICS	The art of governing a city, state, or nation. <i>What about government?</i>

## KEY IDEA

Man has real guilt feelings about his rebellion against God, and so he must reconcile himself with God or face unsolved personal problems.

Source: Dr. David Noebel, *Thinking Like a Christian: Understanding and Living a Biblical Worldview*

## WHAT IS THE BASIC NATURE OF MAN?

With its emphasis on the spiritual and its understanding of man's fallen condition (Romans 1-2), only Christianity can truly address the innermost concerns of the individual. Christian psychology helps people get in touch in their real selves because it allows them to recognize their own sinfulness and consequently their need for a Savior. Our greatest need is *not* self-esteem; rather it is the realization that we are sinners in rebellion against God. As one Christian writer put it, "We're not O.K."

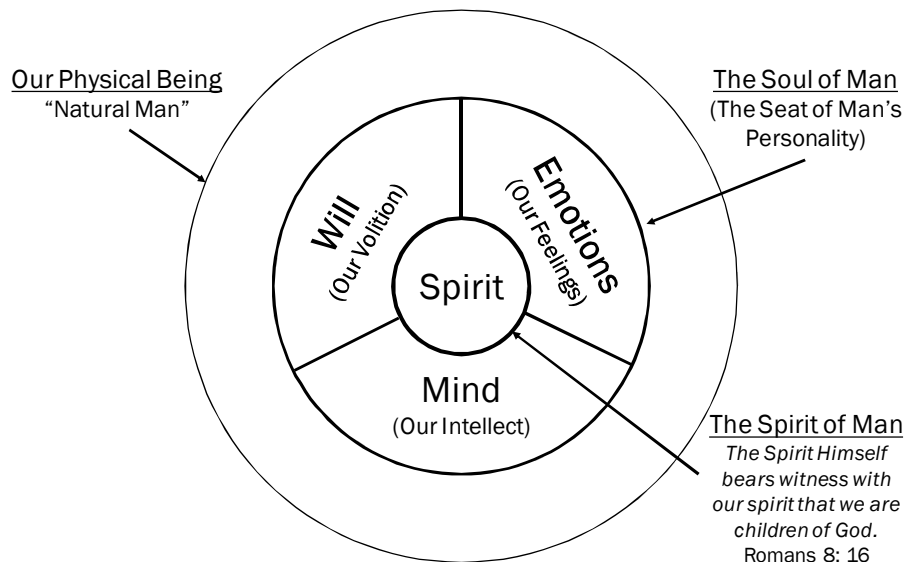
## DEFINING "PSYCHOLOGY"

- ❑ The scientific study of the human mind and mental states, and of human and animal behavior  
*Encarta Dictionary (North America)*
- ❑ The science of mind and behavior; the mental or behavioral characteristics of an individual or group  
*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*

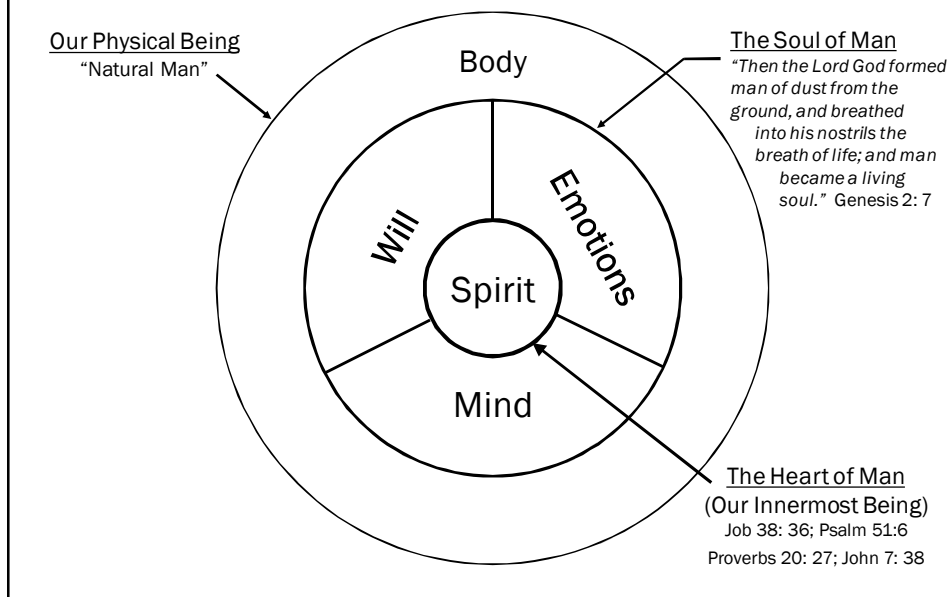
## ROOT WORD: PSYCHE

- Literally translated as “Soul” (ψυχή *psuche*)
- Psychology means the study of the soul.
- Scriptures mentioning body, soul, mind, heart, and spirit suggest a *dualistic ontology* (the study of *being*) – the view that human nature consists of two fundamental types of reality:
  - Physical (material or natural)
  - Spiritual (supernatural)

## THE TRICHOTOMY OF MAN



## THE TRICHOTOMY OF MAN



## SECULAR HUMANISM'S VIEW OF PSYCHOLOGY

- ❑ Since there is no supernatural, there is only one basic and fundamental reality. This is called Monism.
- ❑ Psychological Monism believes that the mind and the body exist as part of the same entity (i.e., the mind – the brain – is part of the material body).
- ❑ Since humans are the by-product of evolution, secular psychologists are left with the study of only material things: the brain, environmental stimuli, and how humans respond or behave with respect to those stimuli.

## HUMANIST MANIFESTO I

- THIRD: Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.
- EIGHTH: Religious Humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfillment in the here and now. This is the explanation of the humanist's social passion.

## HUMANIST MANIFESTO II

SECOND: Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualization, and from rectifying social injustices. Modern science discredits such historic concepts as the "ghost in the machine" and the "separable soul." Rather, science affirms that the human species is an emergence from natural evolutionary forces. As far as we know, the total personality is a function of the biological organism transacting in a social and cultural context. There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body. ...



## GOOD SELF VS. EVIL SOCIETY

“Secular Humanists make three assumptions about the self, mind, and mental processes:

1. We are good by nature and therefore perfectible;
2. Society and its social institutions are responsible for the evil we do;
3. Mental health can be restored to those who get in touch with their inner (good) self.”

Dr. David A. Noebel, *Understanding the Times: The Collision of Today's Competing Worldviews*

## SECULAR PSYCHOLOGY'S CONCLUSIONS



Abraham Maslow

- “As far as I know we just don’t have any intrinsic instincts for evil.”
- “It is as if Freud supplied us the sick half of psychology and we must now fill it out with the healthy half.”

## ONE SECULAR HUMANIST'S CONCLUSIONS

- “The Christian is brainwashed to believe that he or she was born wicked, should suffer as Christ suffered, and should aspire to a humanly impossible level of perfection nonetheless ... A true Christian must always be in a state of torment, since he or she can never really be certain that God has forgiven him or her ...”

Wendell W. Watters

## ONE PERSPECTIVE ON PSYCHOLOGY



William Kirk Kilpatrick

“If you’re talking about Christianity, it is much truer to say that psychology and religion are competing faiths. If you seriously hold to one set of values, you will logically have to reject the other.”

## **DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY AND SECULAR PSYCHOLOGY**

- ❑ Christian psychology acknowledges the sinfulness of man.
- ❑ Understanding the sinfulness of man is critical to understanding our own sinful nature and mental processes.
- ❑ “The great benefit of the doctrine of sin is that it reintroduces responsibility for our own behavior, especially for changing as well as giving meaning to our condition.” – Paul Vitz

## **CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY'S VIEW ON HUMAN NATURE AND SIN**

- ❑ The Christian position goes on to define mankind's nature as inherently evil because of the decision to disobey God in the Garden of Eden.
- ❑ If the Christian view of the nature of mankind is correct, then only Christianity can develop a true, meaningful, and workable psychology.

## **CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY'S VIEW ON GUILT**

- ❑ Since man has rebelled against God, he has real guilt feelings about his sin and must reconcile himself with God or face unsolved mental problems.
- ❑ While other schools of psychology must invent fancy terms to explain away the existence of guilt as a result of real sin, Christian psychology deals with the problem at its root.

## **CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY'S VIEW ON MENTAL ILLNESSES**

- ❑ Whereas secular psychologists speak of mental illnesses, many Christian psychologists deny the existence of a large part of them other than those caused by such organic malfunctions as brain damage, tumors, gene inheritance, glandular, or chemical disorders.
- ❑ “The fundamental bent of fallen human nature is away from God. ... Apart from organically generated difficulties, the ‘mentally ill’ are really people with unsolved personal problems.” – Jay Adams

## **THE REALISTIC APPROACH TO SIN AND GUILT**

- ❑ Because man has a conscience, and because he has rebelled against God, he is bound to experience guilt.
- ❑ Christian psychology points that person toward Christ's sacrificial death on the cross and His resurrection so that the guilty may receive forgiveness and know deliverance from his guilt.

## **CHRISTIAN PSYCHOLOGY'S VIEW ON SUFFERING**

- ❑ Finding meaning in suffering is a feature unique to Christian psychology.
- ❑ Christian psychology believes that God can use suffering to bring about positive changes in the individual.
- ❑ *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.* Hebrews 12:11

## SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

- ❑ The Christian views society as the result of individuals' actions – that is, individuals are understood to be responsible for the evils of society.
- ❑ This worldview stands in direct contradiction to the Marxist/Secular Humanist view that man is corrupted by evil societies.
- ❑ Marxists and humanists think that societies must be changed before man can “learn” to do right.
- ❑ Christians believe that individuals must change for the better before society can.

## CONCLUSION

- ❑ Francis Schaeffer said: “As a Christian, instead of putting myself in practice as the center of the universe, I must do something else. This is not only right, and the failure to do so is not only sin, but it is important for me personally in this life. I must think after God, and I must will after God.”
- ❑ *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.* Philippians 2:3-4