

# Psychology In Prophecy

McMahon, T.A.

I recently gave the title of this article as the topic for one of my messages to an individual who was putting together a prophecy conference. An obvious pause on his end of the phone line told me that he was trying to imagine how psychology might possibly fit in with the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple, the Great Tribulation, the Battle of Armageddon, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and other events and individuals that are common subjects at prophecy conferences. When his lack of response began to approach that awkward stage, I slowly and deliberately quoted [2 Timothy 3:1,2](#): "This I know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves...."

"Go for it!" was his immediate response.

Although the conference organizer didn't know exactly how I was going to treat the subject, he immediately recognized the fit from the phrases: "the last days...perilous times...lovers of their own selves." It's very disturbing ... that most evangelicals (especially pastors) have missed the Apostle Paul's very clear, even strident, warning about the perils of self-love and its connection to psychology in the last days.

To better understand what Paul's concerns were, we need to start with a definition of the term "self." It simply means the person himself. It's me—and all that comprises me. Being a lover of my own self, then, means that I love me, first and foremost. Self fills up my heart, my mind, my will, my consciousness. Self, prior to salvation in Christ, is an autonomous being doing its own thing in rebellion against God. For believers in Jesus who are new creatures in Christ ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)), self should be in submission to Him. A true believer denies himself daily, takes up his cross, is crucified with Christ—and yet he lives, with his life being in Christ by faith ([Matthew 16:24](#); [Galatians 2:20](#)).

Why did Paul put such an emphasis on self as an issue of critical concern in "the last days"? Hasn't "self" been mankind's common problem ever since the first act of disobedience against God in the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 3](#))? Wasn't Satan's seduction of Eve a lying appeal to enhance her "self"? Satan: "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (3:5). And didn't Eve fall for his lies of self-gratification and self-deification? And wasn't self-preservation an obvious product of Adam and Eve's sin as they shifted the blame away from themselves? Adam: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree...." Eve: "The serpent beguiled me..." (3:12, 13). Obviously, self took center stage in the life of mankind from the first act of sin on earth and thereafter!

Yet Paul indicates a special emphasis on self in the "last days." Although self-seeking and self-serving have been dominant characteristics of mankind as far back as the Fall, it has only been since the rise of modern psychology that self has been proclaimed as

the solution to all of our mental, emotional, and behavioral ills. This was a new development of the 19th century that became inevitable as Darwinian “scientists” began promoting their own theory of man’s origin. Why inevitable? Well, as God “lost” His position as mankind’s Creator, He eventually was replaced altogether. Evolutionary theory eliminated any necessity for God, since all life, we were told, came about through natural processes. Taking God out of the picture of life left us with only “self” (or “Self”), resulting in humanity becoming the measure of all things. That, however, has left evolutionists/humanists with a dilemma.

On the one hand, man has been “relieved” of his accountability to his Creator; on the other hand, he’s left by himself to solve all of his problems. This evolutionary and humanistic belief posits that within man is the ultimate and necessary potential for coming up with these solutions. “The Humanist Manifesto I” declares, “Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself the power for its achievement.” If the solutions are not within self, then godless mankind has nowhere else to turn, and, consequently, humanity has no hope. But we are assured by today’s psychotherapists that the cures for humanity’s ills are indeed found within mankind. Thus, Paul’s prophetic warning regarding the “last days” being “perilous times” and characterized primarily by men being “lovers of their own selves” is more fitting to our time than any other period in history.

Replacing God with self leads to the central dogma of the religion of psychology: mankind is innately good. Psychotherapy is an exercise in futility unless innate goodness resides within man at his very core. Here’s why: if man has an evil nature, as the Bible teaches, then it’s impossible for him to change himself. In other words, if I’m innately evil, I will always be evil because there is nothing within me to enable me to change. But if I’m good within but am experiencing problems of living, then through various psychological methods or techniques, I should be able to tap into, utilize, or realize that goodness and thus remedy the adversities I experience. All the psychotherapeutic selfisms, from self-love to self-esteem to self-image to self-actualization to self-realization—and ultimately to self-deification—are predicated upon the innate goodness of one’s nature.

Humanistic psychology—to which all psychotherapies are related—is the pseudo-scientific belief system of the Antichrist, who is the personification of human evil. The basics of his religion were introduced to mankind by Satan in his seduction of Eve (turning her away from obedience to God and toward her own self-interests, even godhood—[Genesis 3](#)) and culminate in a man, the Antichrist, setting himself up in the temple of God to be worshiped as God ([2 Thessalonians 2:4](#)). It’s all about the worship of self.

This Humanist/Selfist religion of the Antichrist does not just suddenly appear on the scene when the Antichrist is revealed. As noted, the religion of selfism has been in development since the Garden of Eden. Moreover, it can be seen in the Tower of Babel

and the idolatry of the Gentiles throughout the Old Testament and is prevalent in all the religions of the world today.

Only biblical Christianity stands against the exaltation of self that ties all other religions together. The Bible declares self to be evil and hopeless and says that man's salvation can come only from God as it is received by faith in Jesus alone, who satisfied divine justice by His full payment for the sins of mankind, according to the Scriptures. All other religions look to self to obtain salvation, ultimately through one's own efforts, whether by rituals, sacraments, meditation, liturgies, good works, and so forth. Human achievement versus Divine accomplishment—this is the critical difference between man's way of salvation and God's way.

The Apostle Paul's caveat about the "last days" is directed at believers, warning them and indicating the peril that will follow the practice of loving themselves. Therefore, it's rather shocking to witness the humanistic "self" concepts of the apostate religion of the Antichrist taking hold in unprecedented fashion within evangelical Christianity. Last month we quoted a well-known Christian psychologist who credited humanistic psychologists and New Agers Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow for helping evangelicals to recognize their "need for self-love and self-esteem." That certainly cannot be derived from the writers of Scripture! Nevertheless, there have been many influential professing Christians who have wittingly or unwittingly sown the seeds of the humanistic self-love teachings so far and wide and for so long among Christians that the heresies have taken root and their deadly fruit has been eagerly consumed throughout the church.

Norman Vincent Peale is widely recognized as the one who pioneered the merger of theology and psychology that became known as "Christian psychology." Consistent with his humanistic beliefs, which he spread through his nationally broadcast radio sermons and his highly popular Guideposts magazine, he explained that people "are inherently good; the bad reactions [sin?] aren't basic." Robert Schuller, whose "Possibility Thinking" reflected (his mentor) Peale's "Positive Thinking," both of which mirror the teachings of the Mind Science cults, sent 250,000 copies of his book, *Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*, to pastors all around the U.S. Schuller's "Hour of Power" is the world's most popular religious television program. Yet to millions, his humanistic views presented under the guise of Christianity are not recognized for their blasphemy: "Jesus knew his worth, his success fed his self-esteem....He suffered the cross to sanctify his self-esteem. And he bore the cross to sanctify your self-esteem. And the cross will sanctify the ego trip!"<sup>1</sup> Could the Antichrist himself add anything more unbiblical?!

Sadly, many conservative evangelical preachers and teachers of note such as Chuck Swindoll, Charles Stanley, Josh McDowell, Anthony Hoekema, Norm Geisler, and others, bought into, taught, Christianized, and further popularized the concepts of self-love, self-esteem, self-worth, and self-image. It is the "new priesthood" of Christian psychologists, however, with credentials that falsely imply the anointing of science, that has convinced both shepherds and sheep of the legitimacy of the theories and methods of humanistic psychology. Among the swelling numbers of highly regarded, degreed professionals who teach the church what they have gleaned from "the counsel of the

ungodly” is Dr. James Dobson, who, no doubt, is and has been the most influential individual among evangelicals for the last quarter-century. Concerning self-love and self-esteem he writes:

In a real sense, the health of an entire society depends on the ease with which its individual members can gain personal acceptance. Thus, whenever the keys to self-esteem are seemingly out of reach for a large percentage of the people, as in twentieth-century America, then widespread “mental illness,” neuroticism, hatred, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and social disorder will certainly occur....<sup>2</sup>

If I could write a prescription for the women of the world, it would provide each one of them with a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need.<sup>3</sup>

Right behind Dobson in terms of his influence in the church today is Rick Warren. Although he has distanced himself of late from one of his early mentors, Robert Schuller (Warren was a frequent speaker in the nineties at the Robert Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership), his article in Ladies’ Home Journal titled “Learn to Love Yourself” is classic Schuller—and pure humanistic psychology (see TBC 4/05). Warren lists “five truths,” none of which is either a “truth” or biblical:

1) Accept yourself; 2) Love yourself; 3) Be true to yourself; 4) Forgive yourself; and

5) Believe in yourself. Yet these humanistic, antibiblical doctrines have been taught so often from so many pulpits that most Christians, when presented with what the Bible actually teaches about self and the selfisms, are either shocked that they’ve been misled or bitterly resent hearing the truth.

Although I could not adequately cover in this brief article the details of how terribly subversive and destructive humanistic psychology (especially as championed in “Christian” psychology) is to Bible-believing Christians, here are a few concerns that we all need to seriously and prayerfully consider: One, humanistic psychology’s theories came from the atheistic, anti-Christian founders of psychotherapy, whose concepts qualify for what the Scriptures condemn as “the counsel of the ungodly” ([Psalm 1:1](#)); Two, the humanistic emphasis upon loving and esteeming self rejects the biblical commandment to “deny self,” which Jesus admonished us to do in [Matthew 16:24](#); Three, the increasing focus on esteeming one’s self gradually distorts a believer’s understanding of the truth regarding the sinful nature of man and hides conviction of sin in a morass of humanistic rationalizations; Four, the subjective feelings orientation of humanistic psychology undermines the absolutes of God’s objective truth; and Five, as the leaven of humanism grows in the mind of a believer, his interpretation of the Scriptures gradually shifts from what God has indeed said ([Genesis 3:1](#)) to “a way which seemeth right unto a man...” ([Proverbs 14:12](#)). Scripture tells us that man’s ways,

i.e., all his self and humanistic teachings, “are the ways of death,” a death that separates a believer from the truth and robs him of his faith and fruitfulness.

How “perilous” will all of this become in these “last days”? Consider the following and, should the Lord tarry, weep for your children. Generally, evangelical youth recognize the pseudo-science and myths of evolution, thanks to the instruction of organizations such as the Institute for Creation Research, and Answers In Genesis, as well as numerous other apologetic ministries, creation scientists, gifted teachers, and so forth. Although the battle continues to rage in this area, not many evangelical young people go off to college intent on becoming “evolutionists.”

Yet what of the pseudo-science and myths of psychology? Who is teaching our children about that? Certainly not the rapidly growing, 50,000-member American Association of Christian Counselors, whose main goal is the “integration” of psychotherapy and Christianity. How serious is this ignorance of the evil of psychology for our young people? The prestigious Princeton Review reports that psychology is the number two career choice for all those attending college. It’s even more popular in professing Christian universities, from Liberty University on the East coast to Fuller Theological Seminary on the West coast and nearly all that reside between.

Who is telling the truth to our children? Not Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family, who ironically advises, “Christian psychology is a worthy profession for a young believer, provided his faith is strong enough to withstand the humanistic concepts to which he will be exposed...[emphasis added]”<sup>4</sup> Weep and pray for our next generation of evangelicals who are being led into the humanistic priesthood of what is tragically and deceptively called Christian psychology. **TBC** <http://www.thebereancall.org/node/2563>

### Endnotes

1. Schuller, Robert, *Living Positively One Day at a Time*, Revell, 1981, 201; *Self-Esteem, the New Reformation*, Word Books, 1982, 14-15.
2. Dobson, James, *Hide or Seek*, Revell Pub., 1974, 12-13.
3. Dobson, James, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women*, Tyndale House, 1975, 60.
4. Dobson, James, *Dr. Dobson Answers Your Questions*, Tyndale, Wheaton, IL, 1989, 497.