***Ignorant Intellectuals, No. 7

RV51-02***

We are studying the letter to Philadelphia in Revelation 3:7-13. In our series of men who have been influential in poisoning the thinking of the human race (Satan's way of preparing humanity for the tribulation world), we have come to the man who is the father of modern psychiatry, Sigmund Freud. The human viewpoint deceit of Sigmund Freud was very subtle because it contained some biblical truths about the human soul, and about the subconscious in man. In many respects, it is compatible with the Word of God. Freud's mental poison consisted of rejecting the Bible as the guide to reality about the human soul, which he needed to interpret the discoveries from his own research. He didn't know how to anchor it to the realities of the human being as God had created him.

**Guilt**

Freud's concept of emotional disturbances, resulting from a false sense of guilt, ignored that there is real moral guilt which man cannot dismiss. Freud's thesis was that people are filled with guilt complexes – guilts which have no basis in reality, and guilts which have been built by the super ego (that conscience factor developed from a variety of sources), and once that's dismissed, then a person is relieved of inner tensions, and he can come to mental good health and to emotional stability.

However, the truth of the matter is that you cannot dismiss moral guilt in that way. You cannot dismiss the fact that you are under God's judgment written upon the human heart, and that we are going to face someone out there – someone to whom we are accountable; and, someone who is so powerful that He made all of the creation that we see around us, and that we have a moral responsibility to Him which we have not attained (we have fallen short of). Everybody knows that you do not live up to your own standards. Every person is quite ready to say, "I know better than I do. I should do better," and that phrase is frequently on our lips in one way or another, so even by our own standards, we do not match up to what we know we should be (in terms of what is right and wrong, that is).

Now, Freud's concept was that all of that can be removed by convincing a person that he has nothing that he should be guilty about. But you cannot dismiss our moral guilt in Adam, nor the guilt that comes from our own sinning. Freud taught that repressing the free expressions of the drive for sexual gratification, called libido, was the cause for destructive behavior. Freud was an atheist, and he saw religion and the Bible as ignorant tools of the super ego to repress the id. Freud's concepts have led to a society of unrestrained indulgence and immorality – in crime, and in rebellion against authority. The tribulation society will be the ultimate example of functioning on an unrestrained id; that is, that compulsion for base desires and base qualities. The tribulation will be the epitome of the opportunity to express that, and to achieve so-called personal mental health for happiness. Freud has done anything but that for the human race.

**Psychiatry**

So, as we look at the status of psychiatry today, we find that leading psychiatrists are now questioning the premise of non-responsibility for one's conduct, which Freud functioned on. Psychiatry has limited effects, in point of truth, on those that it treats. The same percentage of people (which is a very small percentage) of all the people that come to psychiatrists, a minuscule amount (maybe 5% – the last figure I heard) are helped by the psychiatrists. It just so happens that that same number who have mental and emotional disturbances also get over that on their own without the psychiatrists. So, the psychiatrists are not quite sure whether they are just dealing with that 5% that gets well in spite of them rather than because of them.

The best impact of psychiatry, of course, is when it applies biblical principles to relate itself to the issue of sin; legitimate guilt; responsibility; and, the forgiveness of God on the basis of divine justice, which is exercised on Jesus Christ as a substitute. Psychiatry has no meaning unless it is anchored to the point that God will not compromise His integrity; His Holiness will be kept intact; and, that all human relationships must be based upon that fact.

**Emotional Stability**

The legitimate basis for releasing tension of guilt (and people do have tension because they have a sense of guilt over various things) is twofold. For the unbeliever, that tension is released by exercising faith in Jesus Christ as Savior for forgiveness unto eternal fellowship. Nobody becomes a normal human being until that tension of moral guilt is released by receiving Christ as Savior. So, most of the people you know are nuts and off their rockers, and they're covering it up. The world that you move through is filled with a bunch of fruitcakes, and most of them don't recognize that that's what they are. Unless you are born again, you are in a condition of abnormality from the word go. All your sense of guilt is there. You can shove it down into your subconscious so you don't think it's there (so you're not consciously aware of it), but it is eating away, and it is creating its effect upon the human soul. For those of you who are believers, the relieving of the tension of guilt consists of the confession of known sins unto God the Father, as your own priest, in privacy to the Lord, so that you apply the principle of 1 John 1:9 and sin is forgiven for the restoration of temporal fellowship. That is the twofold basis of normalcy within a human life. Psychiatry for the human soul that really works, then, is salvation and the technique of confession. That provides emotional stability.

The thing that psychiatrists have also discovered that makes them a little uneasy is that after all of the analysis, and after all of the lying on the couch conferences and probing of a person's past and trying to analyze what has happened to him in the past that's causing his disturbed behavior in the present, they discover that the same results can be secured through electric shock treatments. Identical results can be achieved just by putting a person through electric shock as well as through the talking with the psychiatrists. As a matter of fact, they also discovered that they can achieve it through attending charismatic meetings. They have the same emotional exaltation and letting go that it takes. When people are given shock treatments, it's because they have a hard-core, obsessive characteristic on something. It's like taking hold of a high-charged electrical voltage wire, and you can't let go of it.

People become obsessive. They have obsessions. This is one of the signs of mental irrationality – that you're obsessed with things. A crazy person will be obsessed with a toothpick, and it's the most important thing in his life. He will consider that thing very important. If someone takes it away from him, he'll just go bananas over the fact, because the toothpick is an obsession with him. And electric shock is given to people who have these hard-core obsessions where they can't relax on some issue, and suddenly they find that they're not bothered by it anymore. That's what psychiatry is supposedly trying to achieve.

**Christianity is not Primarily Concerned with Emotional or Physical Welfare**

So, there's a good question as to whose method is really working. In mental health, you want to remember that the real issue, relative to Christianity, is the fact that Christianity is not primarily concerned about a person's emotional welfare. That is one of Satan's deceptions. It is brought about in part by the Freudian concept. This is part of the poison in the mental thinking of the human race now – that the purpose of Christianity is to establish emotional stability. That's why churches concentrate so much on how people feel about things, and the feeling of people, and so on. Nor is the physical welfare of people the primary concern of Christianity. That is a false notion. That is a secondary concern. Emotional and physical characteristics and needs are secondary concerns of Christianity.

You just start thinking of what you have always read in the Bible, and the perspective that is put upon those things, and you'll see that that it is not how people feel about things that's the big thing with the Word of God, nor their material circumstances. That is not the big thing with the Word of God. If you actually start taking apart some of the great leaders of New Testament Christianity: in the apostles; men like Peter; and, men like Paul, you would find that they had some real personality quirks. They had some real emotional types of characteristics such that we would say, "That's not a good characteristic." You know how Peter was always flying off the handle half-baked and half-cocked. You know how Paul was inclined to be very intense, and very tightly caught up in the situation that he was dealing with. He would say that, "Everything that happens in the church, man, that's a burden on me. I carry it just like you do." Well, all of this indicates that there was something not entirely perfect about them emotionally. Certainly they did not have all the physical well-being that they needed. That was very clear in the case of the apostle Paul. But that is not the primary factor that Christianity occupies itself with in order to produce mental health.

**Christianity is Primarily Concerned with Our Relationship to God**

The thing that is basic in Christianity is a person's relationship to the living and Holy God. That is the thing that the Bible concentrates on, because until you have that, you have zero every place else. You have a false veneer upon what is actually taking place within a person. Man's supreme need and responsibility is to get his wrong relationship to God resolved through God's provision in Jesus Christ. Every human being has a destiny that goes beyond this earth. And long after his emotional problems and his physical needs are behind him, that destiny is going to be with him. And that destiny, going on into eternity, is going to be determined by his relationship to God.

So, never forget that the primary concern of Christianity, no matter what kind of sweet talk and cutesy-pooh, counter-productive concept you get on this subject, the truth of the matter is that Christianity is concerned, first of all, with a human being's relationship to the God that he's going to face and spend all eternity with. Then, his physical well-being and his emotional well-being flow from that as a secondary factor.

In a book called Emotional Problems and the Gospel the author, Vernon Grounds, has a summary of what he calls "a perspective on mental health from the point of view of Christianity," and the deception that can exist on whether a person is really right with God. People have an appearance of being emotionally stable, as if they had a solid core of doctrine in the mentality of the soul from which they were functioning when that very often is not, in fact, the truth. On page 110, he gives these summary statements:

One: "An individual quite completely free from tension, anxiety, and conflict may be only a well-adjusted sinner who is dangerously maladjusted to God. It is infinitely better to be a neurotic saint than a healthy-minded sinner." How often have you listened to some famous entertainment personality say, "Oh, boy, I was really all torn up? My head was just all screwed on crooked. I went to my psychiatrist, and I've been going to this analyst, and boy, he got me straighten out, and things don't bother me, and I'm just stable, and I can take things in stride." And everything is wonderful about him now. But you know that he has not received Christ as Savior. Very often, he is of a religious persuasion (he may be Jewish, so that you know very well he's not going to heaven), and yet he's a perfectly normal, mentally healthy individual. So, what does he have? He has zero – that's what he has. That's why Christianity does not pursue mental stability and physical well-being first, because that will not cut it when he is out in eternity.

Point number two: "Healthy mindedness may be a spiritual hazard which keeps an individual from turning to God precisely because he has no acute sense of need." This is the way prayer functions very often. Who are the people that are out there struggling in prayer? So often, it's the people who are in some desperate crisis need. Who are the people that call upon us to pray for them? It's those who have some crisis need? Who are the people who suddenly show up at prayer meeting? It is those who have some crises need? It almost becomes amusing.

I remember a man years ago. We never saw him in church. We never saw him around. His wife was here. She was active. He was not interested. He was zero. One day, she died, and suddenly he's in church in prayer meeting the next week. Well, somebody with a little less experience would have become very excited about that, and thought, "Isn't this wonderful thing?" But the thing that we would expect happens. It wasn't very long before he disappeared again. To be very healthy-minded, in terms of mental health, anxieties and tension are often the last things that an unsaved person needs, because it makes him think that all is well with him and the world.

Point number three: "Emotional illness springing ultimately from the rift which sin has driven between creator and creature may prove a disguised blessing – a crisis which compels an individual to face the issues of his divine relationship and eternal destiny." Indeed, when people get really racked up emotionally, it is often surprising how they begin to think beyond themselves, and look for something more than their own capacity. So, it's a blessing in disguise.

Point number four: "Thus, in a choice between spiritual renewal and psychic recovery, Christianity unhesitatingly assigns priority to the spiritual dimension of personality."

Point number five: "Mental illness may be an experience which drives a believer into a deeper faith commitment. Hence, mental illness sometimes be a gain rather than a loss." These are the people who are negligent about attending church services where the Word of God is explained and related to the human experience. You and I know very well that there are some of you such that, I don't care – when these doors open, we know that you're going to be here. There are other people in the orbit of this ministry that are sometime-Charlies – up and down. We don't know when they're going to be here, and when they're not going to be here. It does not take us very long to discover in time that it is the yo-yo crowd that comes up with emotional disruptions (not necessarily that you see it), but if you know code words, and if you have a little experience in looking beneath what people say and what they do, you see their aggressiveness; you see their conniving; you see their sneakiness; and, you see the fronts that they're putting up to defend their materialistic orientation, you're not a sucker to what they are putting on. As time goes by, you suddenly discover that their lives have a way of coming apart. They suddenly come to a place where they look at themselves one day in the mirror, and they see a big, hollow, empty nothing. They've gone along for many years thinking that they're conning other people long after people have gotten their number.

Don't kid yourself – without the intake of doctrine into your soul, you, as a believer, cannot be a person free of tension, and stable in the Lord. This is the Christian who begins in the little way to say, "Oh, I can't do this ministry because I've got to do this. I've got to be out earning money. I have a social contact I have to keep. I'm under pressures." When did God ever say that when you're under pressure, that's the time to stay away from church? That is the time you better *not* stay away from church. And it's interesting, where I happen to know what goes on in the lives of people so often, that the very people that are absent in church on a particular Sunday are the ones who should have been there to have something that God had prepared at that point in time that they needed, and they cut themselves out of it because they had some other problem, or some other stupid little thing that they thought was more important for their lives at that point.

Point number six: "Tension, conflict, and anxiety, even to the point of mental illness, may be a cross voluntarily carried in God's service." Sometimes we are under pressures and demands such that we have no choice, but God helps us to carry them in stride. We live under pressures. We live under tensions. The more you are in a position of leadership, and the more people that are dependent upon that leadership and the consequences to them of your leadership, you can count on the fact that you're going to be targets of pressure: human; and, satanic alike. But God enables you to walk and carry that, and there is a strength that goes far beyond human capacity.

Point number seven: "No psychic healing is complete unless it is acknowledged as God's gift, and He is praised for it."

Point number eight: "Health of mind or body is of value only as it is used to serve and glorify God." What good is it to have all the mental stability in the world, and to be able to have an emotional stability if it is not functioning to the Lord's glory?

**Søren Kierkegaard**

We now introduce you to another man. We have two more to go. This one is a man named Søren Kierkegaard. Søren Kierkegaard was a Lutheran theologian. He lived from 1813 through 1855. He was a minister in the Lutheran State Church of Denmark. He came to a point in time where he rejected Lutheran Reformation theology. He did this, in part, because he realized that he was involved in a formal orthodoxy which had been reduced to ritualism, devoid of reality. We have already looked at that representation in the book of Revelation. Orthodoxy – true biblical principles that came out of the Reformation, then degenerated into a ritualistic formalism, so that there was (to the individual person) a sense of meaninglessness. You went through religion because you were born in it, and you went through a formal system, and very often you were never anywhere near entering the new life – you never came anywhere near being born again.

Well, Kierkegaard, as a result of this experience, concluded that spiritual reality was not based on something outside of himself, but on something inside of himself. That was the poison. He concluded the spiritual reality was not something that you brought from outside, as the result of learning the doctrines of Scripture, but that spiritual reality was something that you found by introspection of yourself – by looking into yourself. You can see the variations of the same theme from Satan cropping up in these various influential leaders. This was Dewey's method of bringing about social change. One of the methods of change was this introspection – this subjective examination of yourself to discover truth.

Well, Kierkegaard came up with the same delusion, and he became a super subjectivist. To him, if it didn't happen to you, forget it – it's not true. Only what happens to you is what is true. Reality was not objective truth. It was some kind of an encounter; some kind of an involvement; and, some kind of a happening. It did not matter what the happening was: if it was happening, you were involved. That word "happening" was very prominent in our vocabulary during the 1960s. When the hippie generation was in its flower, this was one of the things that everybody looked for – a happening. Things were described as "happenings." Then every now and then, there are some poor, pathetic Christians who always want to use the terminology of the world, so they start talking about "Christian happenings," because they needed to go to these people to be relevant. That, of course, is that deception that Dewey had: "You must be relevant." Relevancy is usually a means for covering up the truth, not for discovering it.

So, it didn't matter what the happening was. I remember one time, one of the great happenings that was reported was the fact that a bunch of hippies had gathered in a place, and they got a lot of vegetables and fruits (tomatoes; melons; and, things that were kind of on the ripe side), and they built a huge salad out in the middle of the room. They just threw this stuff; they broke it and smashed it; and, then they jumped into it, and they rolled around in it. And it was called "a happening." It gave them an experience, because that was the thing with Kierkegaard – experience.

Sometimes the television reports about mud wrestling. A couple of ladies get into a pool of mud, in one of the local dives, and they wrestle. This is called a happening. That's happening is. It's that sort of thing. It's something that's happened, so you've had an experience? Well, it doesn't matter what it is. It is just showing you that you're alive. If you drive your car, there may be a little old lady out there, and she's standing at the curb, wondering about how she can cross the traffic. Maybe she's standing right there in downtown Paris where it's really scary to cross the street. Well, you can stop your car, and go out and help her across the street. You've had an experience. You've had a happening. Or you can sit there, and you can watch her, and you can take your car; step on the accelerator; jump the curb; hit her; knock her over; and, go down the street. It doesn't matter with Kierkegaard – you've had a happening. The experience is what's important. What it is, is unimportant. Either one will do.

This is sometimes described, in religious terms, as having an affirmation of faith. When the current Pope was traveling in the United States, I remember how on television they were having people give their impressions and their feelings about seeing the pope. And one man got up there and, boy, I could tell he was from some really rabidly liberal group. He was just all beside himself up in his emotions: "This was the most wonderful thing. I've never experienced anything like this." And I heard that word "experience." He said, "This is an affirmation of my faith that will last a long time with me." Do you know what he was saying? He was saying that, "Something has happened within me when I saw the pope," this pagan descendant of Nimrod, this Pontifex Maximus, the ancient pagan king priest god of the Roman emperors, who has now become the vicar of Christ here on earth (the representative of Jesus Christ): "When I saw him, something happened within me, and I came to an affirmation of faith. Suddenly, there was faith in me. Suddenly there was reality." But you notice, he said, "It will last me a long time," which meant that his faith was going to peter out after a while. He is going to have to have another experience and another happening to crack his faith back up again.

**Existentialism**

If you hear that affirmation of faith, just be aware that you are listening to the voice of his majesty the devil, and it came through the philosophy of Kierkegaard. This philosophy is called existentialism. College students who go to secular universities run into this because all the secular universities, by and large, entirely function on the basis of the philosophy of existentialism. That is the framework of their teaching. What this means is that a youngster, who comes from a biblical church where he has godly biblical parents, goes to one of these schools. He finds himself in a class with a sophisticated, intellectual, verbal professor who ridicules the ideas of truth that he has come to college with, that he received from that little church back home, and from his simplistic parents. The appeal is made to the arrogance of intellect to advance to something more, and something that is smarter.

I notice that some of these news commentators have been running reports, interviewing people relative to the conservative movement today – to the Moral Majority movement. I remember one of them standing up and telling us, before the election, "These people are very sincere. I know what they're like. I have come from there myself, and I have moved on (advanced from that dumb biblical position). They are sincere, and they are good folks, but they are going to be disappointed."

Boy, would I like to talk to him now after the November election as to who is disappointed. But he was so smug; he was so confident; and, he was so arrogant. And what was he telling us? He was telling us that his parents taught him that the Word of God is powerful and alive; that he went to a little church that was based upon fundamental biblical concepts and beliefs; that he came to an institution of higher learning; and, he had the arrogance of the intellect put out before him (the appeal to go on and to be smarter than what he has grown up in), so he came to the point where now he found that truth was not outside of himself. His professor told him that, "Truth is what happens to you. Truth is not sweet, concise statements of Bible doctrine. Truth is what happens to you. Truth is what you yourself experience. So truth is now, and the past and the future have no relationship to now."

You must understand that at the heart of existentialism is this concept that right here in the point of time (now) is all that's important. You've heard the term "the now generation." That's from the Kierkegaard philosophy. What that means is that: "You've had a series of experiences up to this point in the past. What is in the past has had absolutely no effect upon this point in the now. It has had no effect whatsoever. So, therefore, forget your past. Ignore what you've come from. Just throw that all aside." Furthermore, existentialism says that it goes the other way, because on the other side of now is the future, and the future is in absolutely no way affected by what you do now. That is real clean-cut, satanic philosophy – contrary in every way to Scripture. It says that what you have done in the past has no bearing upon what's happening to you now. So, forget about the past, and don't worry about anything in the past. It has no bearing on what you do now. Furthermore, what you do now is not going to have any bearing on the future. At the heart of the existential concept is that life is meaningless, and its meaning is only what you experience at this point now.

You can see how that tears a person away from all kinds of restraints; from every kind of a sense of responsibility; and, from every kind of an understanding of any meaning to life at all. The truth is now. The past and the future have no relationship to it. What you do in the present is what's important, and it's of no consequence in the future. Grab all the gusto you can in life, because it only comes around once. That's a good advertising phrase! That is Kierkegaard existentialism put into the advertising of a beer commercial. Exist in the present moment, because there is no future judge. That's what Kierkegaard was saying. Do it now; enjoy it now; and, feel it now.

**Pleasure and Pain**

Kierkegaard's existentialism said that the only good is pleasure, and the only evil is pain. So, anything goes, as long as it's pleasurable, and as long as it doesn't create pain. All of the major secular universities and colleges function on this concept. And those who come out of those institutions as teachers are shot-through with this existential philosophy. It will be at the heart of the tribulation world. This is part of what God is going to preserve you from – all that flows from this living and existing in the moment of time now, and cutting yourself off from the past and the future.

**Art**

This is very evident in the field of art. It used to be that you would go to an art gallery in order to look at some great paintings that had understandable meaning. They were understandable portrayals. You looked at George Washington crossing the Delaware, standing up there in the front of the boat.

You went up to the Huntington Art Museum in Huntington Beach in California, and you looked at Blue Boy and Pinkie. The originals are there. You recognize Blue Boy, standing there in his blue costume, and you recognize Pinkie in her lovely pink dress, and you realized that you were looking at two great pieces of art.

You would go to the Louvre in Paris, and you walked up to that encased picture of the Mona Lisa. You would look at the Mona Lisa, and you recognize her. You see that sly little smile on her lips, and your mind starts singing "Mona Lisa, Mona Lisa, how I love you." Now, you're singing to something that you recognize. That's the Mona Lisa; it's a lady; and, you see her. Nobody has to tell you, "That's a woman. Her name is Mona. Lisa is her last name: Mona Lisa." You don't need them to tell you about it. You stand there in the Louvre, and it's a very exciting experience. I did this last summer, and there she was, sure enough, just as big as life.

Or you look at pictures, and here's a famous battle. Here's Napoleon's dramatic portrait of defeat at Waterloo. Or you look at portraits of historical people. That's how it used to be when you went to the art museum.

In comes Søren Kierkegaard with his existential concept of meaninglessness, and finding significance only in the moment as to what a thing does to you. That's the only meaning in life. There is no objective truth outside of yourself. Now you go to an art museum: you walk into the art museum in Chicago down on lake front, and you see a huge black canvas with a yellow square in the middle. They paid thousands upon thousands of dollars for that. It's a great work of art. They probably stole it from some kindergarten kid at Berean Academy. They blew it up to size, and they suckered somebody into paying thousands of dollars for it. Then they had a big discussion on how to hang it. But finally they decide this way, and there it is. I've stood, and I've looked at that thing. This is a great piece of art. And I wonder, "What does that mean?"

Then I've looked at pieces of art which were produced by laying a canvas out; stringing a bunch of cans on supports above it with holes in the bottom; pouring paint in the cans; letting it drip on the canvas; and, then standing there and swishing it around. That's another idea they stole from Berean Academy kindergarten. Then they take this thing, and to give it a real artistic touch, the guy walks through it barefoot. Then they hang it on the wall. It is a great expression of art. You look at this: "What does this mean?"

You look at a picture. Here's a stairway coming out of a human ear. On this stairway are a bunch of tomato cans filled with tuna fish. And you wonder, "What is the meaning of this significant picture?" This stairway is coming out of this human ear with these tomato cans filled with tuna fish. And you turn to the guard and you say, "What does this mean?" And he looks at you. "What does it mean? It's not what it means. What does it do to you? How does it grab you?" Have you wondered where that expression came from? It's existentialism, pure through and through: "How does that grab you?" Some of you didn't think you were existentialists. You've been sashaying around here and saying, "How does that grab you, fella?" What you're doing is using existential talk to show that you're really uppity and hippity.

**Sculpture**

Sculpture is the same way. It used to portray rational, meaningful, recognizable figures. We would think about great statues. We think about Washington D.C. You go to Arlington Cemetery, and there you stand, as we did on one of our trip camps, before the famous statue made from the photograph of the raising of the flag by the United States Marines on Mount Suribachi in the campaign of Iwo Jima. You look, and you recognize what this is. You see the canteens; the cartridge belts; the rifles; the M-1s; the carbines; the side arms; the characteristic combat dungarees; the little packet of the emergency wound application; and, everything else. You just look at; you know it; you can relate to it; and, you understand it.

Or you go to New Orleans, and you stand before St. Louis Cathedral. And there you see the magnificent statue of General Jackson on his horse. You look at that, and you know what you see. Someone doesn't come up to you and say, "The horse is underneath, and Jackson is on top." You just look at it, and you figure that out for yourself clearly enough.

Or you go to the British Museum, and you see the Venus de Milo. You look at her, and here's this beautiful shapely gal, and you wonder what happened to her arms. ... But you know what it is. You can figure it out. You've sort of seen that sort of thing before.

Now, Kierkegaard's existentialism comes along, and says, "No, that isn't the way sculpture should be." So, in the city of Chicago, they have some Picasso sculptures. They had one put up several years ago, and there is this constant debate on what it means and what it signifies: What is it? People have all kinds of discussions because here's this blob of metal sitting outside of the city hall. Last week, they unveiled a companion piece, and it's also a blob. You look at this, and you ask: "What is it? What does it represent? What does it mean?"

Or you look at something that looks like two dozen coat hangers welded together and draped with spaghetti. You look closer, and sure enough, that's what it is: two dozen coat hangers welded together and draped with spaghetti. And you say, "What does that mean? What was this representing?"

Or you see some shapeless piece of granite: just a glob of granite. You look up, and there's the title: "The thing." This is the thing.

Again, you go up and you say, "What do these things mean?" And the guards say, "What do they mean? It doesn't mean anything. How do you relate to it? What does it make you feel? How do you react?" You say, "Well, I don't understand." And the guard says, "That's wonderful. You're getting it now. When you don't understand, you're getting there. Do you understand?" And he's trying to get to you that what you are doing is looking at meaninglessness, because that's what Søren Kierkegaard was out to tell us: "Life is a meaningless, empty blob." Art has certainly portrayed that. That's why you have the kind of art you have. That's why you have the kind of painting you have. That's why you have the kind of sculpture you have – to convey the concept that there is no meaning to life. In existential art, nothing is anything anymore. Meaning is passé. All that Kierkegaard's philosophy conveys is truth from within yourself: how the thing strikes you when you look at it. And that kind of meaninglessness, unfortunately, is not restricted to something in the world of art.

It is also transferred to morality; it is transferred to social relationships; it's transferred to marriage; it's transferred to the home; it's transferred to the family; and, it's transferred every place down the line, so there is meaninglessness in everything. It's only how you happen to feel at the moment. That is the only anchor point that you have – the moment, which is no anchor point at all.

So today, people have had their minds so corrupted by existentialism that they are ready for the reprobate and hopeless lifestyle of the tribulation period. They're ready for it, because they're taught to live for the now, and they're taught that it doesn't matter. It's all meaningless. You're not going anywhere, because behind all the thinking of Søren Kierkegaard and those who followed him was that when you're dead, you're like a dog. They throw you in a hole; they cover you over; and, that's it. There is nothing beyond that. So, grab all the gusto you can, because life only comes around once. Kierkegaard said that there was absolutely no way to have a rational relationship between heavenly and earthly things. It was not possible, by human reason, to relate the things of God; the spiritual world; and, the unseen, and the things of this world.

Of course, that's what was portrayed in the scene in the Vatican of the School of Athens that we showed at the banquet. You had Aristotle standing, pointing upward, and you had Plato pointing downward. It was the philosophical expression of the fact of what the philosophers have always been looking for: How do you find out about the things of heaven, and how do you relate them to the things of earth? How do you find out about what's out there from here? That picture of the School of Athens is a beautiful portrayal. Aristotle is pointing out to the heavenly things, and Plato is pointing to the earthly things. The whole issue was: How do we get these together?

If this was all the world you ever knew; if you had been born in this auditorium; if you saw nothing but what you see now; and, if you knew nothing but what is around you now, how much could you know about the God who is out there? How much could you know about spiritual reality? How would you reach out and find it? Well, once you have rejected the revelation of the Word of God, and once you have rejected the evidence that the Bible so clearly gives of its own authenticity; of its supernatural production; of the fact that it is inerrant; and, of its absolute accuracy – once you reject it, you have nothing beyond this room that you will ever know. All you'll know is what you can see with your senses. That's exactly where Kierkegaard has led people, because what he did was took to the men we've already studied.

He took, first of all, Immanuel Kant, and he took Kant's principle that all you know is what you get through your five senses. He concluded that human reason cannot arrive at information about the spiritual realm and God. He said that in the natural realm, like science, you can discover things, but when it comes to spiritual things, can't know it because all you know is what comes through your five senses. Well, it is true that man, by wisdom and by reasoning, the Bible tells us, did not come to the knowledge of God. God has to reveal Himself. He has to give us that information. But if you reject the source of that information, and if you reject the book in which that's recorded, then you've got nothing else to turn to.

So, to find purpose in life with Kierkegaard, he said that man has to believe that such a realm exists. Now, reason says that that's absurd. But Kierkegaard said that here is man, and he's existing down here in this realm on the earth. All he sees is this that holds him in. Kierkegaard said that man, by nature, knows that that is not enough. There has to be some power. There has to be a rational power. As the human being is rational, there has to be somebody more rational than I am out there that created all this, and that brought all this together.

So, Kierkegaard says that you have to realize that there must be a power. There must be what he called a god. And he tried to explain how to reach this realm that he called the non-rational. We live in the rational, where we can think things through. The non-rational is an area that the senses can't enter into. In order to enter that, he came up with the phrase called "a leap of faith." And again, unfortunately, we have some evangelical Christians who love to pick up the terminology of the world, and they think that they are really upbeat and current, so they describe being saved as "a leap of faith." That is nonsense. That is total dry rot. You do not become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ (a born-again person with eternal life secured) by a leap of faith.

What Kierkegaard meant was that you just have to say, "There's got to be something up there, and I'm just going to believe it, even though my senses tell me that there is nothing but what I see. There is no reality beyond the world I'm in. But yet, I'm going to say that there is something. And therefore, I am going to make a leap of faith and believe what's up there." That's why they have to have these experiences that stir their emotions to have that affirmation of faith. After a while, no matter how you tell yourself, "Boy, there's something out there," you begin to cool off. Then you have to have another experience to reaffirm your faith so that you keep telling yourself, "There's something out there. I believe in something, but I don't know what it is now."

Christian faith is not meaningless. Christian faith is directed to an object. It is directed to an object that existed in time and space. It is directed toward the living person of Jesus Christ, the God-man, who entered the human realm, and who actually lived and walked on this earth. Those of you who were at the banquet saw some of the great places that His feet actually trod. You saw the place that He lay in death, and from which He rose again, and stood up on His feet, walked out of that tomb alive forevermore, and set the pattern for our own experience. This is what actually took place. When we believe on the basis of the authority of Scripture, we're not leaping out into some irrational faith. It is a faith which is grounded upon the reality and the evidence of Scripture. That's not just a jump into the unknown. That's a conviction based upon a lot of hard-core evidence.

The concept of "only through my senses," Kierkegaard brought from Kant. Then he turned to Hegel, and from Hegel, he said that man has to find relative reasons to give meaning to his life, since no absolute truths exist. So, experience becomes the means to securing some kind of relative experience. He picked up Hegel's concept that experience is the thing, and that what you experience now changes what you believed before, and through the dialectic process, you come up with a new concept. So, in the secular universities, professors are teaching students that any experience is good – and they mean any experience. Sometimes they have found that that has turned around and burned them, because they get a student in the class that decides he wants to have the ultimate experience – the end experience. And what is the ultimate experience? Suicide. And you have a lot of suicides among young college adults, because they are expressing their existential beliefs, and they're going for the ultimate thing. They're grabbing the last big gusto.

Drugs, sex, and all of these things have been incorporated from Hegel's concept through Kierkegaard – of finding an experience of meaning, like the rejection of authority. All of these are non-rational experiences. With Kierkegaard, the thing that counts in your relationship to God is not what you know, but how you feel about it, and how you react. Kierkegaard said that it's not what you know of doctrine. It's just how you feel. The Bible completely rejects this. The Bible calls men to faith in Jesus Christ not because of absurd faith (a leap into the irrational), but because there's good historical ground: His life; His miracles; His death; and, His resurrection.

What this eventuated in, from Kierkegaard, was existentialism, and then existentialism eventuated in various forms: atheistic existentialism; and, theistic existentialism. Existentialism in the atheistic form is not going to touch you all that much. But theistic existentialism is being rammed down our throats from everywhere: even from solid Christians who ought to know better. When you find someone like Billy Graham who makes commendatory statements concerning the teachings of Søren Kierkegaard, you've got a tough act to fight, when you realize that this man was poisoning the mind of the human race. And somebody (a powerful voice) comes up and says something to lead you to believe that he has something significant to say. And Christians are deceived by theistic existentialism. We shall take that up next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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