

BLASPHEMY FROM FROMM

A Critique of Selected Writings of Erich Fromm

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Erich Fromm is a psychologist who devotes considerable space in his writings to discussing the Bible and related religious issues. His orientation can be described as *humanistic*. However, the word *blasphemy* has been chosen for this paper. Fromm is an admitted atheist who retains the use of the word "God" but radically redefines it, proposing that *man* is fully autonomous, free even from God. His theories result in the exaltation of man to the level of deity, and that is blasphemy. In fact, his book entitled *You Shall Be As Gods* is subtitled "a radical reinterpretation of the Old Testament and its tradition."

The following abbreviations will be used to identify Fromm's books when quoted in this paper:

<i>You Shall Be As Gods</i>	YG
<i>The Dogma of Christ</i>	DC
<i>Man for Himself</i>	MH
<i>The Heart of Man</i>	HM
<i>Psychoanalysis and Religion</i>	PR

SCRIPTURE TWISTING

Fromm's approach to the Bible is one which should set off theological alarms. His basic position, revealing both his atheism and his unorthodox perspective on the Scriptures, is best put in his own words:

"I do not look at it as the 'word of God,' not only because historical examination shows that it is a book written by men --different kinds of men, living in different times--but also because *I am not a theist*. Yet, to me, it is an extraordinary book, expressing many norms and principles that have maintained their validity throughout thousands of years. It is a book which has proclaimed a vision for men that is still valid and awaiting realization. It was not written by one man, nor dictated by God; it expresses the genius of a people struggling for life and freedom throughout many generations." (p. 7, YG, emphasis added)

Thus Fromm rejects the transcendent God who exists independently of his creation. He rejects the truth that all Scripture is breathed out by the living God (2 Timothy 3:16), viewing it instead as a purely *human* book that he puts to his own devious uses.

Fromm contends that there are contradictions in Scripture, both in the Old Testament and in the oral tradition (p. 10, YG).

These contradictions were not always smoothed out by the "editors" (p. 8, YG). Here he denies the inerrancy of God's Word. As for historical accuracy, he specifically refuses to consider it, apparently considering it irrelevant (p. 91, YG). His concern is more focused on biblical values such as life, love, justice, freedom, and truth (p. 180, YG), with a blatant disregard for the giver of those values and the accuracy of what has been written.

Admitting that he is "not a specialist in the field of biblical scholarship," Fromm claims that his "fundamental orientation" is rooted in the "great rabbinical scholars," and the result of many years spent in the study of the Old Testament and the Talmud (p. 12, YG). Note, however, how clearly his "fundamental orientation" is his presumption of *atheism*.

Evolution is one of the pillars of Fromm's view of Scripture. He says that the Old Testament contains:

"...a remarkable evolution from primitive authoritarianism and clannishness to the idea of the radical freedom of man and the brotherhood of all men" (p. 6-7, YG).

The "radical freedom" of man, or rather his sinful autonomy, is the major theme of Fromm's writings. Along with the evolutionary thrust, this idea becomes the driving force behind a clearly New Age theology concerning man's future:

"The Old Testament is a document depicting the evolution of a small, primitive nation, whose spiritual leaders insisted on the existence of one God and on the nonexistence of idols, to a religion with faith in a nameless God, in the final unification of all men, in the complete freedom of each individual." (p. 9, YG)

"The interpretation of the Bible given in this book is that of *radical humanism*. By radical humanism I refer to a global philosophy which emphasizes the oneness of the human race, the capacity of man to develop his own powers and to arrive at inner harmony and at the establishment of a peaceful world." (p. 13, YG)

Fromm's interpretive approach to Scripture is indeed radical. He imposes his atheism and claimed autonomy on its holy pages, twisting its teaching to serve his own sinful purposes. If space permitted, examples could be cited of Fromm's Scripture twisting, including the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath, and the Psalms.

Before moving on, I would like to express appreciation to Westminster Theological Seminary in Escondido, CA, and Professor Robert Strimple, for the course, "Christianity Confronts Modern Atheism." Having carefully examined the varied writings of seven twentieth century atheists, against a background of sound Christian apologetics, I am much better equipped to evaluate the writings of

one more rebel who attempts to hold down the truth in unrighteousness.

GOD

It is a bizarre experience to read page after page, analyzing Scripture and using the word "God," yet written by a professed atheist. Clearly, Fromm has in mind something other than the God revealed in the Scriptures. In order to understand his writings, we need to understand how Fromm defines--or fails to define--the concept of God.

Following are several brief descriptions of "God" in Fromm's system of thought:

"...a historically conditioned expression of an inner experience" (p. 18, YG)

"...conditioned by the presence of a socio-political structure in which tribal chiefs or kings have supreme power" (p. 18, YG)

"God is a *symbol* of all that which is in man and yet which man is not, a *symbol* of a spiritual reality which we can strive to realize in ourselves and yet can never describe or define." (p. 115, PR, emphasis added)

"...the process of being rather than something finite that could be named like a thing" (p. 116, PR)

"ONE who represents the supreme value and the supreme goal for man: the goal of finding union with the world through full development of his specifically human capacities for love and reason" (p. 22, YG)

"...one of the many different poetic expressions of the highest value in humanism, *not a reality in itself*" (p. 18-19, YG, emphasis added).

Thus for Fromm, *God is not a reality, not the sovereign Lord who created the world, not a personal being*, but merely an idea in the mind of man, a *symbol* or concept, an expression of an "inner experience." This "symbol" is "in process," unlike the eternal, unchanging God revealed in Scripture. In Fromm's system, man in effect creates God! This bears striking similarities to nineteenth century atheist Feuerbach, who also denied the existence of God and claimed that humanity as a species is the real deity.

Speaking more specifically to the existence of God, Fromm expresses confidence in his ability to "explain" the belief in God. He notes that others believe that "man has an intrinsic religious need" explained only by "something transcending him...which is

derived from supernatural powers" (p. 55, MH). Fromm contends on the contrary that:

"The latter assumption is unnecessary since the phenomenon can be explained by the full understanding of the human situation." (p. 55, MH).

His "explanation" is phrased in terms of man's need for harmony, or unity, with nature:

"Devotion to an aim, or an idea, or a power transcending man such as God, is an expression of this need for completeness in the process of living." (p. 55, MH)

Freud, who is admired and quoted often by Fromm, also attempted such "explanations" (see the paper, "Freudian Frauds"). So have numerous other atheists. However, Romans 1 turns the tables on these godless men, revealing God's explanation of their speculations. Living in rebellion against the living God, they hold down the truth in unrighteousness.

The "Evolution" of God

We have noticed that Fromm considers "God" to be a *concept* and not a reality. This leads into his denial of the eternal nature of God, since a *concept* may change over time:

"Word and concepts referring to phenomena related to psychic or mental experience develop and grow--or deteriorate--with the person to whose experience they refer." (p. 17, YG)

"There is simultaneously permanence and change in any living being; hence, there is a permanence and change in any concept reflecting the experience of a living man." (p. 18, YG)

"If the concept becomes alienated--that is, separated from the experience to which it refers--it loses its reality and is transformed into an artifact of man's mind." (p. 19, YG)

Fromm applies all of these statements to God, noting that a concept only *points- to*, but *is not*, the experience to which it refers (p. 19, YG). He further explains that man, in his striving for systematization, fills in the blanks where his knowledge is incomplete (p. 20, YG). He calls his position "nontheistic mysticism" (p. 19, YG), but it would be better described as outright atheism.

Fromm sees "contradiction inherent in the concept" of God because "God has created a creature which is his own potential challenger" (p. 23, YG). However, it is ludicrous to presume that a mere concept in the mind of man could be man's Creator! God is,

of course, the Creator of man, but Fromm mutilates the biblical view of His nature by reducing Him to a "concept" created by man.

The evolutionary view of God is related by Fromm to biblical history. Here, as elsewhere, Fromm twists the Scripture to claim support for his atheism. He claims that the "growth and evolution of a nation" is accompanied by a corresponding "growth and evolution in the concept of God" (p. 22, YG). After the fall (which Fromm radically redefines), "the whole further evolution of the concept of God diminishes God's role as man's owner" (p. 24, YG). Fromm can only draw this conclusion on the presupposition that his upside down view of the Fall is correct (see later discussion on this issue). Then, at the time of Moses, Fromm claims additional "evolution" when God calls Himself "I AM" (p. 28-29, YG). He translates "I AM" as "a nameless god," saying that because this term is "the first person of the imperfect tense of the Hebrew verb 'to be'" (p. 30, YG), God is therefore "a living process, a becoming...his being is not completed like that of a thing" (p. 31, YG). However, his knowledge of the Hebrew imperfect verb is deficient. The imperfect has numerous uses, one of them being the expression of a general, timeless truth. Here, "I AM" refers to the eternal nature of God. He is self-existent, having existed for all eternity past and existing for all eternity in the future. He is not "nameless" as Fromm suggests. Rather, many passages of Scripture describe His character through the use of various names.

The Knowledge of God

Can God be known by man? According to the Scriptures, God is known in a limited sense through His creation, so that man is without excuse for his unbelief, and He is known more specifically by the believer through His Word. Many verses speak about the knowledge of God. Of course, such knowledge is not comprehensive, because man is finite and God is infinite. However, it is possible for man to have true knowledge of God, who purposely reveals what He desires for man to know.

But according to Fromm, *God cannot be known*. In the "evolution" of God, "from the jealous God of Adam, going on to the nameless God of Moses, and continuing to the God of Maimonides," man knows only *what God is not*. Thus we have, in Fromm's mind, "the end of theology" (p. 37, YG). He claims that in "later Jewish view there is only one thing that matters, namely, that God is...little importance is attached to the speculation about God's nature and essence" (p. 42, YG). He further claims that the Bible emphasizes the imitation of God rather than knowledge about Him (p. 179, YG).

A couple of significant conclusions are drawn from this unbiblical foundation. One is that *man also cannot be known* (p. 178, DC). This, too, defies Scripture. God clearly reveals the nature of man, his fundamental problem (sin), how that problem is

solved through His redemptive plan, how man ought to live, and how he can change.

Another conclusion, alarmingly similar to New Age thought, is that man can merge with God:

"One of the consequences of such negative theology is mysticism. If I can have no full knowledge of God in thought, if theology is at best negative, the positive knowledge of God can be achieved only in the act of union with God."
(p. 178, DC)

This statement is utterly opposed to the biblical Creator/creature distinction which is fundamental to understanding both God and man. Fromm ought to honestly acknowledge his atheism and leave theology alone.

God and Man

Fromm is blatantly anti-Christian and anti-biblical when he begins to relate God to man. Man, he claims, is "God's potential rival...man *could* become God if only he were to eat from the tree of knowledge and the tree of life" (p. 22, YG). Man the rebel "carries potential Godhood within himself" (p. 24, YG). God is..."not a symbol of power over man but of man's own powers" (p. 49, PR). Fromm believes in "the fundamental identity of God and man" (p. 49, PR). This is all utter blasphemy, but there is more. He reverses the Fall, calling it "the beginning of human freedom," and claiming that "the Christian interpretation of the story of man's act of disobedience as his 'fall' has obscured the clear meaning of the story" (p. 23, YG). He further claims that submission to God and fear of Him decrease over the years such that "man becomes God's partner and almost his equal" (p. 47, YG). Truly, it is Fromm who has obscured the clear meaning of the biblical text!

Covenant. The biblical truth about covenants is mutilated by Fromm to lend support to his blasphemous theories. He claims that "the relationship between God and man changes fundamentally" at the time of the Flood, so that "God is no longer an absolute ruler" (p. 44, PR). After that point:

"God can punish man if he violates this principle (the promise not to destroy all life again), but man can also challenge God if he is guilty of its violation." (p. 44, PR)

This statement is not even coherent, considering Fromm's denial of the very existence of God as a Person. It is also absurd to claim that man could "challenge" God after the destruction of all life on earth. Besides the lack of basic logic here, Fromm is clearly in rebellion against the living God, holding down the truth in unrighteousness.

Addressing the idea of *covenant* specifically, Fromm claims:

"The idea of covenant constitutes, indeed, one of the most decisive steps in the religious development of Judaism, a step which prepares the way to the concept of the complete freedom of man, even *freedom from God*." (p. 25, YG, emphasis added)

"Covenant" is defined as a treaty in which "God and man have become partners," resulting in the loss of God's freedom to be arbitrary, and man's ability to challenge Him (p. 25, YG). Although a full discussion of covenants is beyond the scope of this paper, it is clearly unbiblical to assert man's autonomy in this manner, or his ability to challenge God. Further research on covenants, if space permitted, would demonstrate the *one-sided* nature of certain biblical covenants. When God cut His covenant with Abraham, He *guaranteed* its fulfillment. His covenant after the Flood was not to destroy the earth again by *flood*, but other Scriptures make it clear beyond a doubt that He will bring history to a close and destroy the physical elements by *fire*.

God's sovereignty and divine authority are dismantled in Fromm's theory:

"God in the Bible and in the later tradition allows man to be free; he reveals to him the goal of human life, the road by which he can reach his goal; but he does not force him to go in either direction." (p. 47, YG)

God is the one who works all things according to the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11). Man does have a *limited* freedom of will, and certainly he is *responsible before God* for his obedience or disobedience to God's revealed standards. Yet God is sovereign, King of Kings, Lord of Lords.

God's Role in History

It should come as no surprise that Fromm denies God's supernatural intervention in the course of man's history. He limits God's role to sending messengers who "show man a new spiritual goal," hoping man will choose life but *not saving man by an act of grace* (p. 185, DC). In examining the account of the Jews enslaved in history, Fromm refuses to acknowledge God's intervention, stating instead that He lets man "work out his own salvation" (p. 187, DC). The following summarizes Fromm's unbiblical perspective:

"Does God make it possible for man to become free by changing his heart? Does God intervene in the historical process? No. Man is left to himself and makes his own history; God helps, but never by changing man's nature, by doing what only man can do for himself." (p. 92, YG)

Praise God this is not true! If God did not intervene in history, man would be left without any possibility of eternal salvation, provided in the death and resurrection of Christ. Fromm denies the gospel altogether by his blasphemous statements.

Idolatry

Listening to an atheist's view of idolatry is just as strange as listening to his views of God and Scripture!

In Scripture, idolatry is *sin against God*. In Fromm's system, idolatry is *sin against man*.

Fromm calls God "the negation of idols," noting that "the war against idolatry is the main religious theme that runs through the Old Testament" (p. 42, YG). An idol "represents the object of man's central passion" or "the supreme value within man's system of values" (p. 43, YG). Idolatry is "necessarily incompatible with freedom and independence" (p. 46, YG).

Idolatry is indeed a fundamental Old Testament theme, and it involves man's highest value or passion. However, Fromm is more concerned with man's alienation *from himself*, the *limitation of that self*, rather than his exchange of the worship of God for the worship of created things:

"The idol is *the alienated form of man's experience of himself*. In worshipping the idol, man worships himself. But this self is a partial, limited aspect of man: his intelligence, his physical strength, power, fame, and so on. By identifying himself with a *partial aspect of himself*, man *limits himself to this aspect*; he loses his totality as a human being and ceases to grow. He is dependent on the idol, since only in submission to the idol does he find the shadow, although not the substance, of himself."
(p. 44, YG; see also p. 109, HM)

Thus Fromm opposes idolatry, as he has redefined it, because it limits man's total autonomy and freedom. This "idolatry" supposedly means the "transferring (of) his living powers into things outside himself" which he then must worship "to keep his sense of identity" (p. 48-9, YG). Clearly, Fromm is more concerned about man's "sense of self" than about his relationship to the God of Scripture who created him and sustains his life.

Biblically, idolatry concerns the worship of any *false god*. But Fromm sees "idolatry" as common to all religions and even to atheism:

"Indeed, the knowledge of idols and the fight against idolatry can unify men of all religions and those without any religion. Arguments about God will not only divide men but substitute

words for the reality of human experience and eventually lead to new forms of idolatry."

Fromm carries to this point of uniting all religious faiths, in a manner which again parallels the New Age movement:

"Mankind can be spiritually united in the negation of idols and thus by an unalienated common faith." (p. 49, YG)

He also uses his view of "idolatry" to claim that *atheists* may have a faith or "religious attitude" superior to that of professing believers:

"It is easy to see that many who profess the belief in God are in their human attitude idol worshipers or men without faith, while some of the most ardent 'atheists,' devoting their lives to the betterment of mankind, to deeds of brotherliness and love, have exhibited faith and a profoundly religious attitude." (p. 113, PR)

It is true that some professing believers are hypocrites, and that atheists may, from a purely human perspective, work toward the "betterment of mankind." Nevertheless, idolatry is the failure to worship the true living God revealed in the Bible. Despite human appearances, atheists are among those who have exchanged the worship of God for the worship of created things, and thus they are idolaters. Fromm has replaced the biblical view of idolatry with a counterfeit that matches his own presuppositions.

Conclusions: God as "Symbol"

Fromm believes we ought not to focus "on the acceptance or denial of the symbol God" because such discussion "blocks understanding" (p. 113, PR). He claims that when some people choose to retain the "symbol God," that retention might be "a forced attempt to retain a symbol whose significance is essentially historical" (p. 114, PR). Elsewhere he comments on the twentieth century "is-God-dead?" dilemma, made famous by atheist philosopher Nietzsche:

"Is God dead? The question should be divided in its two aspects: Is the *concept* of God dead or is the *experience* to which the concept points, and the supreme value which it expresses, dead?" (p. 228, YG)

He responds by stating his preference for the question of whether *man*, rather than God, is dead (p. 229, YG). He again wants to distinguish between the *concept* of God and what that "concept" supposedly symbolizes:

"The atheist position prevalent in the nineteenth century suffers from the same bias as the theistic position, that of making the *concept* of God the main issue rather than the values which it symbolizes. Atheism was essentially a declaration of independence from the principle of the supreme ruler rather than an answer to the spiritual problem of man." (p. 228, YG)

These distinctions are utter nonsense in view of the reality that the sovereign Lord of Scripture does exist, *and must exist!* He is the God who *cannot not exist*. Without Him, there is no explanation or meaning for anything at all. Man denies Him only at the risk of eternal peril.

Finally, Fromm poses this challenge to those who share his atheism:

"For the nontheistic humanists a further question arises: What could take the place of religion in a world in which the concept of God may be dead but in which the experiential reality behind it must live?" (p. 229, YG)

What indeed? Fromm, and others like him, have no answers, but rather continue to devise schemes that serve to hold down the truth in unrighteousness. Man has substituted numerous *idols* in place of the living God. By biblical definitions, Fromm is another idolater, shaking his fist in the face of God who will one day hold him fully accountable for his sinful rebellion.

THE NATURE OF MAN

Fromm's denial of the God of Scripture results in severe distortions in his teachings concerning the nature of man. It is impossible to correctly study man without a biblical understanding of God. Fromm's erroneous view of man is nothing less than blasphemy.

Man as the Image of God

Fromm makes a statement that sounds almost biblical when he says:

"The most fundamental statement of the Bible in regard to the nature of man is that man is made in the image of God." (p. 63, YG)

However, we cannot take this statement at face value, because when Fromm uses the word "God," he refers to his own atheistic concepts and *not* the sovereign, eternal God revealed in the Scriptures. Note how Fromm's thought proceeds:

"The biblical report not only speaks of man being made in the image of God--it expresses shortly afterward God's fear that man might become God himself. This fear is clearly stated in Genesis 3:22-23." (p. 54, YG)

In addition, Fromm *claims that the serpent predicted correctly, that man actually did become "as God" and that he did not die* (p. 64, YG). At first he denies that man could *become God*, but then he states that:

"There are rabbinical statements that imply that the difference between God and man can be eliminated."
(p. 68, YG)

"The idea that man has been created in the image of God leads not only to the concept of man's *equality with God*, or even freedom from, it also leads to a central humanist conviction that every man carries within himself all of humanity."
(p. 81, YG, emphasis added)

This is an extreme exaltation of man that mutilates the biblical view. Furthermore, supposedly basing his conclusions on Psalm 8, he claims unlimited evolutionary potential for man:

"Man is seen as being created in God's likeness, with a capacity for evolution of which the limits are not set."
(p. 70, YG)

Psalm 8, while referencing man's dominion over the rest of the creation, does nothing to exalt man's potential in this manner, but on the contrary, emphasizes man's *insignificance* in comparison to Almighty God. Fromm's writings continually obliterate the distinction between God the Creator and man the creature. In view of his denial of the very existence of God, this is not surprising. He has clearly taken the side of the serpent--the devil--against the true God. Man, in his sinful autonomy, replaces God in Fromm's system. Man's creation *in the image of God* is altered such that man usurps the throne of God. This is a spiritually fatal error.

The Evolution of Man

Evolution underlies Fromm's view of man. However, his emphasis is not so much on the origins of man from lower forms of life, but rather on future evolutionary potential, and on the "constant change" in man so that there is no fixed "nature" or "essence" (p. 146, HM):

"Human nature is not fixed, and culture thus is not to be explained as the result of fixed human instincts; nor is

culture a fixed factor to which human nature adapts itself passively and completely." (p. 31, MH)

This is a distortion of man's creation in the image of God. Man does not have fixed "instincts" such as those observed in animals, and he does have a will, with the ability to think and make decisions. He is indeed unlike the rest of God's creation, but not in the manner proposed by Fromm, whose sin is so much like that of the devil at the time of his fall from heaven (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28).

Man's Fundamental Problem

Fromm notes the widespread influence of Luther and Calvin on modern Western society's view of man (p. 126, MH), but he clearly rejects this perspective. He reinterprets the "fall" as alienation from two perspectives. First, he sees man as alienated from nature. With the knowledge of good and evil, he claims, Adam and Eve lost their original harmony with nature. Nature is now man's enemy, "not to be reconciled until man has become fully human" (p. 70, YG):

"Man is the only animal for whom his own existence is a problem which he has to solve and from which he cannot escape. He cannot go back to the prehuman state of harmony with nature; he must proceed to develop his reason until he becomes the master of nature, and of himself." (p. 49, MH)

As a result:

"His desire is to give up reason, self-awareness, choice, responsibility, and to return to the womb, to Mother Earth, to the darkness where the light of conscience and knowledge does not yet shine." (p. 87, YG)

"He is driven to overcome this inner split, tormented by a craving for 'absoluteness,' for another kind of harmony which can lift the curse by which he was separated from nature, from his fellow men, and from himself." (p. 50, MH)

Next, the fall is turned upside down when Fromm sees man as alienated from *self*:

"When man has thus projected his own most valuable powers onto God, what of his relationship to his own powers? They have become separated from him and in this process he has become alienated from himself." (p. 50, PR)

"The real fall of man is his alienation from himself, his submission to power, his turning against himself even though under the guise of his worship of God." (p. 53, PR)

This bears striking similarity to atheist Feuerbach, who claims that "God" is merely a *projection* of man's highest qualities, rather than a reality. Fromm views man as frantically pursuing everything in life, only to lose his *self* along the way:

"He is forced to recognize that in trying to gain all the wealth of the world, in relentlessly pursuing what seemed to be his interest, he had lost his soul--or, as I would rather say, his self." (p. 142, MH)

Fromm further explains man's fundamental problem as a failure to fully use his own powers:

"It follows from the very nature of man, from the principle that the *power to act creates a need to use this power and that the failure to use it results in dysfunction and unhappiness.*" (p. 220-1, MH)

Note ever so carefully how Fromm avoids the issue of man's *separation from God due to his sin!* Separation from nature and separation from *self* replace separation from *God* in this atheistic system.

Disobedience. Repeatedly, Fromm considers disobedience to be a virtue rather than a sin, "man's first step toward freedom" (p. 11, HM; p. 149, DC). He is blinded to the truth of Scripture, and blatantly defies God:

"Is man basically evil and corrupt, or is he basically good and perfectible? The Old Testament does not take the position of man's fundamental corruption. Adam and Eve's *disobedience* to God are not called sin." (p. 10, HM)

"All that Adam can be reproached with is disobedience; if disobedience is sin, then, indeed, Adam and Eve sinned. Yet it is very significant that in the story of the 'fall' the Bible never calls Adam's act a sin." (p. 159, YG)

He does admit that "the Christian development was different" in that:

"Adam's disobedience was conceived as sin. In fact, as a sin so severe that it corrupted his nature and with it that of all his descendants, and thus man by his own effort could never rid himself of this corruption. Only God's own act of grace, the appearance of Christ, who died for man, could extinguish man's corruption and offer salvation for those who accepted Christ." (p. 11, HM)

As Christians, we know that disobedience is indeed sin, and that the only hope is in the salvation offered by God in Christ. Fromm must reject the entire thrust of both Old and New Testaments to speak as he does concerning the nature of man's disobedience. Contrary to Fromm's allegiance to the serpent, man did indeed die when he disobeyed. He died *spiritually*, and physical death entered the world at that time, extending to all men.

Notice how Fromm has turned the tables even further by attempting to attribute evil motives to God and turn man's sin into a virtue:

Even though man disobeyed in the beginning..."further religious development has made the knowledge of good and evil the cardinal virtue to which man may aspire. The text also makes it plain what God's motive is: it is concern with his own superior role, the jealous fear of man's claim to become his equal." (p. 43, PR)

Such statements are obviously, to the Christian, utter blasphemy. Of course God is concerned with His own glory and "superior role." *He is God!*

Adam and Eve. Along with some modern theologians, Fromm denies the historicity of Adam when he says that:

"Man's body was made from the dust of all parts of the earth, that is...Adam represents all of humanity." (p. 84, YG)

Fromm calls the account of Adam and Eve "the biblical creation myth" which "starts where the Babylonian myth ends" (p. 118, DC).

We have already reviewed Fromm's view of Adam's act of disobedience. These statements confirm his belief that the entire account is not historically accurate, but merely a "myth." Thus his entire view of man, and his potential "freedom," is grounded in an event that he believes never actually occurred in real history! This is remarkable. Meanwhile, as believers we must affirm the historical accuracy of the account, and the vital importance of this truth. In Romans 5:11-21, Paul describes the close parallel between Adam's sin, imputed to all men, and Christ's righteousness, imputed to all believers. If you deny the historicity of the first event, you deny both imputations...and thus the entire gospel!

Man's Nature: Good or Evil? Fromm rejects any teaching that would view man as having an inherently evil nature as the result of his fall into sin. It is particularly unfortunate that he claims Scripture as supporting his erroneous view:

"The Bible leaves no doubt that it does not consider man either good or evil, but endowed with both tendencies." (p. 159, YG)

Fromm moves on to discuss the biblical phrase, "evil imaginations" and the Hebrew verb *yatzar* which means to "form" or "imagine." Drawing on his own *evil imaginations*, he says:

"The Hebrew word indicates the important fact that evil (or good) impulses are possible only on the basis of that which is specifically human: imagination." (p. 160-1, YG)

"Does all this not imply that the biblical view of man is that his essence is evil, that man is essentially corrupt? This interpretation cannot stand against the fact that, while the Bible acknowledges the fact of man's 'evil imaginings,' it also believes in his inherent capacity for good." (p. 161, YG)

This Hebrew verb may be used of either human or divine activity. It means to form, to fashion, or to create. Man's creative activity has a certain similarity to that of God, because man is created in His image. However, God created Adam out of the dust of the earth; man cannot do this! Nothing about the Hebrew word suggests that man's nature is not sinful. Most importantly, bear in mind that Fromm rejects the God of Scripture. He does not view man in covenantal relationship to God, created upright but now fallen into sin. Thus he imposes his own *evil imaginations* and atheistic assumptions onto the pages of Scripture.

Fromm acknowledges that man can *become* evil:

"We have shown that man is not necessarily evil but becomes evil only if the proper conditions for his growth and development are lacking. The evil has no independent existence of its own, it is the absence of the good, the result of the failure to realize life." (p. 220, MH)

"Every evil act tends to harden man's heart, that is, to deaden it" until, eventually, "there comes a point of no return, when man's heart has become so hardened and so deadened that he has lost the possibility of freedom." (p. 101, YG)

Here, despite Fromm's extreme view of man's autonomy and unlimited potential, he views man as essentially the *victim* of circumstances. This is not only unbiblical, but highly inconsistent. Yet he still sees *man*, not God, as capable of autonomously removing the obstacles in his path to freedom:

"The wish to make productive use of his powers is inherent in man, and his efforts consist mainly in removing the obstacles in himself and in his environment which block him from following his inclination." (p. 231, MH)

"The potentialities of man are such that given the proper conditions they will be capable of building a social order governed by the principles of equality, justice, and love."
(p. 210, MH)

The hope in all this is not apparent! Man is not the victim of circumstances, but responsible before God for his responses to those circumstances. At the same time, man is totally unable to provide his own salvation. God must graciously provide for him the power to change.

It is important to note here that Fromm does not hold to inherent goodness, in his rejection of man's sinful nature, but is open to either possibility being realized:

"Man is neither good nor evil. If one believes in the goodness of man as the only potentiality, one will be forced into rosy falsification of the facts, or end up in bitter disillusionment. If one believes in the other extreme, one will end up as a cynic and be blind to the many possibilities for good in others and in oneself." (p. 157, HM)

"If both inclinations are still in some balance he is free to choose, provided that he can make use of awareness and that he can make an effort." (p. 193, HM)

Before commenting further, let us see how Fromm defines good and evil:

"Evilness is a specifically human phenomenon. It is the attempt to regress to the pre-human state, and to eliminate that which is specifically human: reason, love, freedom.... *Evil is man's loss of himself in the tragic attempt to escape the burden of his humanity.*" (p. 192, HM)

"Good consists of transforming our existence into an ever increasing approximation to our essence; evil into an ever increasing estrangement between existence and essence."
(p. 193, HM)

In the Bible, however, good and evil are seen in relationship to God's commandments. Evil is not the "loss of self" and has nothing to do with being estranged from oneself. Rather it consists of disobedience to God, man's estrangement from God.

Fromm cannot deny the evil--or rather sin--that resides in man. Repetition of evil does indeed harden the heart. What man needs, however, is to be reconciled to God through faith in Christ. He is then regenerated, given a *new heart*, transferred from spiritual death to spiritual life, and recreated in the image of Christ. Only then is he able to live a life that is pleasing to

God. Only then does he have any capacity for genuine good, according to *God's* standards.

Sin: Original and Otherwise. By now, it should be clear that Fromm rejects the biblical teachings concerning original sin. He notes the controversy between Pelagius and Augustine some centuries ago, claiming that Augustine's victory "darkened man's mind for centuries" (p. 213, MH). Pelagius assaulted the Bible's teaching that Adam's sin has been imputed to all future men, such that every person (excepting Jesus Christ) is born in a condition of sin and guilt. Fromm also notes the belief in man's inherent goodness that developed during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods (p. 12, HM):

"The view that man's substance was not corrupted is emphasized again and again in the messianic-prophetic concept and later, when hope for historical salvation asserted itself, as, for instance, in Renaissance humanism or in eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophy." (p. 122, YG)

Fromm claims, however, that he is not engaging in any "sentimental optimism" about man's future, as modern man is gripped by powerlessness and "a new version of corruption and original sin" may develop, providing "rationalization for the defeatist view that war cannot be avoided because it is the result of the destructiveness of human nature" (p. 13, HM). But while he makes no definitive statement about the future, he recognizes the implications of his views:

"The Messianic concept of the prophets certainly implies that man is not fundamentally corrupt and that *he can be saved without any special act of God's grace*. But it does not imply that this potential for good will necessarily win. If man does evil he becomes more evil." (p. 11, HM, emphasis added)

Note his rejection of the necessity for God's grace. His view of the potential of man is thus highly flawed.

Sin, says Fromm, "is not primarily sin against God but sin against ourselves" (p. 88, PR). Man's status as a "stranger" in the world, split from *nature* and *self*, is not to be equated with his being a *sinner* with a corrupted nature (p. 121, YG). Rather, Fromm ignores the grave seriousness of sin and considers it something merely human:

"The idea (evil imaginings) is not one of 'collective guilt' or of 'original sin,' but is based on the humanist concept that we all share in the same human nature, hence 'we have sinned, stolen, robbed, murdered,' and so on.... Because we all share in the same humanity, there is nothing inhuman in sinning, hence nothing to be ashamed of, or to be despised for." (p. 175-6, YG)

A related reinterpretation is made of repentance, which Fromm claims is "not the attitude of the meek sinner, accusing himself for his transgressions and prostrating himself" (p. 169, YG).

All of this piles up evidence that Fromm is *holding down the truth in unrighteousness*. Denying the sovereign Lord, he also denies the seriousness of man's sin against Him. He could hardly be further from the biblical truth.

Fromm's general view of man underlies further teachings about how man ought to live and how he can change. He himself recognizes that *his own system would collapse "if" man were truly sinful in nature*:

"The position taken by humanistic ethics...would be untenable if the dogma of man's innate natural evilness were true."
(p. 212, MH)

We must agree with this statement, and thus *reject his system of humanistic ethics*, based as it is on a foundation of lies.

Alienation/Separation. Fromm repeatedly expresses concern about man's alienation, his status as a "thing." In fact, it is man's unique existence as a *person*, rather than a *thing*, that leads Fromm to acknowledge the limits of psychological study:

"Psychology tries to give a rational account of the innermost core of an individual soul. But complete rational knowledge is possible only of *things*.... *Man is not a thing*; he cannot be dissected without being destroyed, he cannot be manipulated without being harmed, and he cannot be reproduced artificially." (p. 175, DC)

Therefore, "psychology can show us what man is *not*" but "it cannot tell us what man, each one of us, *is*" (p. 176, DC). Furthermore, the professionals in this field contribute to the problem:

"Modern man experiences himself as a *thing*...and his fellow man as a thing to be used for profitable exchange. Contemporary psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis are involved in this universal process of alienation. The patient is considered as a thing, as the sum of many parts."
(p. 180, DC)

These are key admissions about a field that has been wrongly embraced by Christians. The Bible *does* tell us clearly about the nature of man, how he should live, and how he can change. It does not give us merely negative knowledge about what man is *not*. Fromm has rejected the *one and only basis for not viewing man as a "thing,"* because he rejects God. It is man's creation in His image that distinguishes him from other creatures and from *things*.

Throughout his writings, Fromm emphasizes man's separation from self, from nature, and from others (leaving out God!). He claims that:

"Man has to experience himself as a stranger in the world, estranged from himself and from nature, in order to be able to become one again with himself, with his fellow man, and with nature, on a higher level." (p. 88, YG)

Fromm describes human existence as a "paradox" in which man seeks both independence from, and closeness to, others (p. 51, 102, 103, MH). Sometimes, he attempts to "escape from freedom" by attaching himself to another person, rationalizing his attachment as "sacrifice, duty, or love" (p. 113, MH). This Fromm calls "masochism." Modern industrial society, he claims, has led to man viewing himself as a "commodity" in which "his own value depends on extraneous factors" and "his security lies in conformity" (p. 96, DC). He is imprisoned by his work, absorbed with consumption, and lacks meaning in life (p. 97-9, DC). He feels himself helpless in the face of "the social and economic forces he himself has created" (p. 102, DC). Even religion, says Fromm, "has become an empty shell...transformed into a self-help device for increasing one's own powers and success" (p. 99, DC). Man has, supposedly, lost his "sense of self" despite the increase in production and comfort in modern times (p. 100, DC). He must, counsels Fromm, turn from his materialism to concern for "spiritual" values such as love, truth, and justice (p. 101, DC). Fromm argues for both *separation* from "the primary ties to soil and blood" (p. 179, DC), as well as *oneness* with humanity and nature. Here is how he phrases the problem:

"In the nineteenth century the problem was that *God is dead*; in the twentieth century the problem is that *man is dead*."
(p. 100, DC)

God is certainly not dead! Man's problem is that he is spiritually dead, *separated from God*.

Conclusions. Fromm's erroneous view of man is best summarized by his own words, in which he admits having sided with the devil--and against the true God:

"In the process of history, man gives birth to himself. He becomes what he potentially is, and he attains what the serpent--the symbol of wisdom and rebellion--promised, and what the patriarchal, jealous God of Adam did not wish: that man would become like God himself." (p. 123, YG)

The Conscience of Man

Fromm contrasts the "authoritarian" conscience with the "humanistic" conscience, clearly preferring the latter. In doing so he rejects the standards of God's Word.

Authoritarian Conscience. This conscience is an "internalized authority" which "becomes dangerous when the authorities command evil things" (p. 55, YG). The individual is motivated by fear of the authority, hope for reward, and desire to please, rather than actual guilt (p. 148 & 150, MH). The fear is one of rejection rather than punishment (p. 151, MH). The most serious sin is rebellion against the authority's rule (p. 152, MH), and one must not dare to become like the authority, "for this would contradict the latter's unqualified superiority and uniqueness" (p. 152, MH). Standards are determined by the outside authority, rather than by one's own value judgments (p. 149, MH). The authority is seen to be greater and more powerful, and the individual "has found inner security by becoming, symbiotically, part of (that) authority" (p. 151, MH). The assertion of one's own will results in guilt (p. 153, MH). Some degree of sadism results, and the person's "destructive energies are discharged by taking over the role of the authority and dominating oneself as the servant" (p. 155, MH).

Calvin's "concept of guilt" is cited as "extreme type of authoritarian conscience" (p. 172, MH). Fromm also notes that:

"The child's natural reaction to the pressure of parental authority is rebellion, which is the essence of Freud's 'Oedipus complex.'" (p. 161, MH)

Fromm paints a bleak picture of the "authoritarian conscience," and in doing so, he clearly rejects the biblical view of God's absolute authority over man.

Humanistic Conscience. By contrast, the "humanistic conscience" is:

"...the voice of our total personality expressing the demands of life and growth. 'Good' for the humanistic conscience is all that furthers life; 'evil' is all that arrests and strangles it. The humanistic conscience is the voice of our self which summons us back to ourselves, to become what we potentially are." (p. 55, YG)

"...the reaction of our total personality to its proper functioning or dysfunctioning." (p. 162, MH)

"...the voice of our loving care for ourselves...the expression of self-interest and integrity." (p. 163, MH)

"...the inner voice that calls us back to ourselves...the human core common to all men, that is, certain basic

characteristics of man which cannot be violated or negated without serious consequences." (p. 157, DC)

The standard here is "knowledge within oneself" (p. 162, MH). Putting others ahead of self, as Scripture teaches, violates Fromm's "humanistic" conscience:

"To cripple oneself by becoming a tool of others, no matter how dignified they are made to appear, to be 'selfless,' unhappy, resigned, discouraged, is in opposition to the demands of one's conscience." (p. 163, MH)

Note, however, how opposite this is to the biblical view of loving, joyful sacrifice for the sake of God and others.

Conclusions. Fromm claims that everybody has both of these "consciences" (p. 169, MH), and that man's conscience has evolved:

"Acquisition of an authoritarian conscience was a stage in the process of human evolution necessary before rationality and freedom had developed to an extent which made humanistic conscience possible." (p. 170, MH)

He also distinguishes between "irrational" and "rational" authority, the latter being:

"...an authority which is based on competence, and the function of which is to help another person accomplish a certain task." (p. 161, DC)

The crucial distinction that Fromm fails to make, however, is between the *divine* authority of God, which is absolute, and the *human* authorities which He has ordained, which have clear biblical limits. Fromm's exalts "humanistic" conscience such that man, not God, takes the throne of the universe and sets the standards. His definitions in this critical area amount to rebellion against God.

Self: Selfishness, Self-Love, and Self-Interest

Fromm believes that modern society views selfishness as sinful and love for others as virtuous (p. 124, MH). His books were written just a few years ago, however. Today, even in the church, self-love, self-love, and other selfisms are valued more than sacrificial love for God and others. The popular but deadly "codependent" teachings have contributed to this unfortunate state of affairs.

Fromm believes that the teaching, "don't-be-selfish," is:

"...one of the most powerful ideological tools in suppressing spontaneity and the free development of personality." (p. 132, MH)

However, he notes that modern man is taught *simultaneously* to keep his own advantage in mind, resulting in such confusion that "torn between the two doctrines, he is seriously blocked in the process of integrating his personality" (p. 132, MH). He may *think* according to self-interest, but *live* a life of self-denial (p. 140, MH).

Fromm raises a key question as to whether selfishness and self-love are mutually exclusive. Comparing Christian theologians to modern atheist philosophers Stirner and Nietzsche, he comments that they:

"...agree with them (Calvin and Luther) in the assumption that love for others and love for oneself are alternatives...they denounce love for others as weakness and self-sacrifice and postulate egotism, selfishness, and self-love." (p. 128, MH)

Fromm, however, proposes something he considers altogether different:

"*Is his selfishness identical with self-love or is it not caused by the very lack of it? ... The logical fallacy in the notion that love for others and love for oneself are mutually exclusive should be stressed. If it is a virtue to love my neighbor as a human being, it must be a virtue--and not a vice--to love myself since I am a human being too. There is no concept of man in which I myself am not included.*" (p. 133, MH)

"The love for my own self is inseparably connected with the love for any other self.... Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all those who are capable of loving others." (p. 134, MH)

Thus, Fromm considers self-love and selfishness to be *opposites*, stating that the selfish person actually *hates* himself (p. 135, MH):

"He seems to care too much for himself but actually he only makes an unsuccessful attempt to cover up and compensate for his failure to care for his real self. Freud holds that the selfish person is narcissistic, as if he had withdrawn his love from others and turned it toward his own person. *It is true that selfish persons are incapable of loving others, but they are not capable of loving themselves either.*" (p. 136, MH)

Fromm also proposes a "neurotic unselfishness," but claims that such individuals are usually troubled by other symptoms (p. 136, MH). This sounds remarkably like today's "codependency," although

that term had not been coined and reached the heights of popularity that it enjoys today.

Analyzing the fundamental problems of modern man, Fromm believes that one must have self-knowledge in order to understand and serve his own interests (p. 138, MH). He considers the lack of self-love, and lack of self-interest, to be a major failure in today's society (p. 143, MH). He believes man has made himself an "instrument" for the state or economy, "accepting the contents of the Calvinistic doctrine while rejecting its religious formulation" (p. 139, MH).

Sadly, similar doctrines of self-love, self-esteem, self-interest, and the like have invaded even the Christian church of today. Believers need to know the atheistic foundations of these teachings. Scripture does not analyze the heart of man in this manner, but rather affirms that *no one ever hated his own self (Ephesians 5:29)*! God commands love for Him and love for others, but *nowhere does He command love of self!* Love of self is assumed when Jesus summarized all of the law as hanging on two commandments: first, to love God, and second, to love one's neighbor as oneself. Godly men in Scripture, in the presence of God, were overwhelmed at the awareness of their own sinfulness (Isaiah 6:5, Job 42:5-6). We ought to be, too. Doctrines of self-love, as taught by atheists like Fromm, have no rightful place in the church.

Love

Fromm claims to promote love, and it is in this area that many have succumbed to his teachings. He lines up with much that is taught today *in the church* about the claimed necessity to love *self first* before love for others is possible. We discussed the issue of self-love earlier, but now we turn to examine Fromm's view of loving others.

Here is Fromm's basic definition:

"Love is the productive form of relatedness to others and to oneself. It implies responsibility, care, respect, and knowledge, and the wish for the other person to grow and develop." (p. 116, MH)

Concerning the love of God, who for him is a mere "concept," he says:

"The human reality behind the concept of man's love for God in humanistic religion is man's ability to love productively, to love without greed, without submission and domination, to love from the fullness of his personality, just as God's love is a symbol for love out of strength and not out of weakness."
(p. 87, PR)

The goal of analytic therapy, according to Fromm, "is essentially an attempt to help the patient gain or regain his capacity for love" (p. 87, PR). He relates this goal to the basic knowledge of man, and more specifically to the role of the therapist:

"Love is active penetration of the other person, in which the desire to know is stilled by union." (p. 176, DC)

"He (the therapist) must become one with him (the patient) and at the same time retain his separateness and objectivity, so that he can formulate what he experiences in this act of oneness." (p. 181, DC)

Love involves labor as well as responsibility, though not a responsibility imposed by any external authority:

"One loves that for which one labors, and one labors for that which one loves." (p. 105, MH)

"Responsibility is not a duty imposed upon one from the outside, but is my response to a request which I feel to be my concern...to be responsible means to be ready to respond." (p. 105, MH)

The statement "love your neighbor as yourself," taught by Judaism and Christianity, is claimed by Fromm to be equivalent to the "essential teachings of all the great humanistic religions," summarized by this sentence:

"It is the goal of man to overcome one's narcissism." (p. 108, HM)

It is Buddhism, Fromm says, which most clearly and radically expresses this principle. The "awakened person" in the Buddhist tradition is aware of realities such as death and disease, having overcome his "narcissism" (p. 108, HM). This person is claimed to be capable of loving another because he is *different* from oneself, rather than because he is essentially like oneself (p. 109, HM). It requires a leap of logic to see how this is consistent with the unity of mankind, taught elsewhere, or Fromm's teaching that every individual carries "all of humanity" within himself.

Some of this may sound reasonable at first glance, but do not be deceived. Jesus summarized all of the law by the two commands to love God and one's neighbor, but He did not mean what Fromm means. He *assumed* self-love but did not *command* it as a prerequisite to the love of others. Intimate *knowledge* of another person is not explicitly related to love in the Scriptures. In fact, only God has comprehensive knowledge of the heart of another person.

Love does involve labor on behalf of others, but it is hardly possible to understand this in any biblical sense without a grasp

of the work of Christ on cross. For the Christian, love extends even to one's enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). Love is grounded in God's love demonstrated by sending Christ to die for us *while we were yet sinners* (Romans 5:8). There is nothing of these concepts in Fromm's writings, nor is he even able, as an atheist, to understand such love.

Biblical love does not involve any type of mystic "union" with another person, which is not even possible. Nor does it involve the "live and let live" attitude of Fromm. His desire for the growth and development of the other person is inadequate, because it is not grounded in biblical truth. The Christian who loves another person desires that person's eternal salvation and subsequent growth in godliness, not a mere realization of human potential. The standards are radically different.

Fromm has absolutely nothing to add to the biblical concept of love, which is comprehensive and sufficient. The believer does not need the poisoned views of an atheist in order to love others, as God has given to him *everything that pertains to life and godliness* (2 Peter 1:3-4). The Christian loves because God has first loved him.

Man's "Religious Experience"

Fromm's "authoritarian/humanistic" distinction is applied to religion in a manner parallel to his analysis of conscience. He claims that this distinction cuts across both "theistic" and "nontheistic" religions, and also that both elements may exist within the same religion (p. 38 & 42, PR).

Religion: Definitions. Fromm believes that a "religious experience" may be either *theistic* or *nontheistic*. As an atheist, of course, he chooses the latter. Several modern, highly unorthodox theologians are quoted as examples of those who promote a "nontheistic" religion: Paul Tillich, J. A. T. Robinson, Rudolf Bultmann, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer (p. 57, YG).

Religion is defined as:

"...any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion" (p. 21, PR).

Fromm's "object of devotion" is clearly *man, not God!* He outlines several "main aspects" of religious experience:

1. "To experience life as a problem, as a 'question' that requires an answer" (p. 58, YG).
2. To have "a definite hierarchy of values" with the "highest value" as "the optimal development of one's own powers of reason, love, compassion, courage" (p. 58, YG).

3. To make "man alone...an end and never a means" (p. 58, YG).

4. To "empty" oneself of fear so as to become open and receptive, "transcending the ego, leaving the prison of one's selfishness and separateness," an experience which is "essentially the same whether it refers to God or not" (p. 59-60, YG).

5. To be concerned "with the meaning of life, with the self-realization of man, with the fulfillment of the task which life sets us" (p. 94, PR, referencing Paul Tillich).

Fromm believes that there are "profound existential dichotomies" that characterize life, such as: freedom/determination, separation/unity, knowledge/ignorance. The "religious" person directs his activity in life "toward finding the optimal solution to these contradictions, while at the same time he knows that there is no solution" (p. vii, PR). What a dreary contrast to the glorious eternal hope and assurance of the Christian believer!

A "religious attitude," to Fromm is "simultaneously the fullest experience of individuality and its opposite" (p. 95, PR). It is also:

"...an attitude of pride and integrity and at the same time of a humility which stems from experiencing oneself as but a thread in the texture of the universe." (p. 95, PR)

This radically defies the biblical view of man's attitude before God, which should be characterized by a profound humility--not pride!

Fromm sees the primary purpose of religion as the furtherance of man's development of his own powers (p. 26, PR). He believes that the psychologist's job is to analyze the "psychological roots of various religions" and evaluate their value (p. 26, PR), and to understand the "human reality behind thought systems" (p. 62, PR). Note how Fromm has set up the psychological "expert" as the judge of religion! On the contrary, the Scriptures judge the atheistic systems of psychology devised by ungodly men. Fromm considers neurosis to be "a private form of religion...a regression to primitive forms of religion conflicting with officially recognized patterns of religious thought" (p. 27, PR). It differs from a cult in that the latter is a shared experience (p. 32, PR). Note carefully the lack of concern for God's truth.

Authoritarian Religion. The characteristics of "authoritarian" religion are similar to those of the "authoritarian" conscience:

1. Man recognizes "some higher unseen power as having control of his destiny, and as being entitled to obedience, reverence, and worship" (p. 34, PR).

2. Obedience is the main virtue, disobedience the primary sin (p. 35, PR).
3. Man "loses his independence and integrity" (p. 35, PR).
4. God is "a symbol of power and force" (p. 36, PR).
5. The mood is one of guilt and sorrow (p. 37, PR).
6. It may be secular in nature, as in the case of an authoritarian government where the individual is insignificant (p. 36, PR).
7. Man "projects the best he has onto God and thus impoverishes himself...the more perfect God becomes, the more imperfect becomes man" (p. 50, PR).
8. There is fear and trembling, with a feeling of depravity (p. 88, PR).
9. There is ritualistic atonement or a priest, to absolve the person from guilt (p. 89, PR).
10. The individual fears punishment or loss of love from the authorities if he disobeys (p. 91, PR).

Fromm cites Calvinism as a prime example of "authoritarian" religion (p. 35, PR). His views are a horrendous distortion of the Reformed faith, however. He fails to acknowledge the existence of the sovereign Lord, who does indeed control man's destiny. Guilt is absolved by the blood of Christ, and the mood is one of extreme joy--eternal joy, not the "doom and gloom" picture wrongly painted here by Fromm. The believer need have no fear of punishment or loss of love (1 John 4:18, Romans 8:31-39).

Humanistic Religion. This is clearly Fromm's alternative to the *faith once and for all delivered to the saints!* It is rooted and grounded in atheism, exalting man. Here are key characteristics:

1. It is "centered around man and his strength" (p. 37, PR).
2. "Religious experience" is "oneness with the All" (p. 37, PR). (This sounds like New Age theology!)
3. Man's purpose is "to achieve the greatest strength, not the greatest powerlessness; virtue is self-realization, not obedience" (p. 37, PR).
4. Mood is joy.

5. God is "a symbol of man's own powers" (p. 37, PR) or "the image of man's higher self" (p. 49, PR).

6. Supposedly (but not really!) the teachings of all of the following are examples: Isaiah, Jesus, Buddhism, Taoism, Socrates, Spinoza, and Christian mysticism.

7. Man is responsible for his own fate; he is free and independent (p. 52, PR).

8. Characterized by tolerance and love. Supposedly, the individual reacts to sin with concern for his salvation, rather than in fear. Fromm cites John 8:7 as the "humanistic attitude toward sin." (p. 89, PR)

This type of religion cannot stand except under the assumption that there is no God! Fromm is highly deceptive in his statement that a godless religion is *joyful*, because ultimately it leads to *eternal torment*. The attitude toward sin appears on the surface to be one of humility and love. Of course, we are to love and restore others who sin, not reject them in a spirit of contempt or self-righteousness. However, such an attitude can only be grounded in the forgiveness that the believer knows he has received from God, on the basis of Christ's death and resurrection. Humanism offers no basis for love or humility, but ultimately breeds pride and hatred.

Faith and Doubt. It is not surprising that Fromm has invented his own definition of faith, a definition that has nothing in common with the *Christian* faith.

First, he states that in earlier years:

"The fight against faith was a fight for emancipation from spiritual shackles...against irrational belief...the expression of faith in man's reason." (p. 200, MH)

Now, he says, the *lack* of faith observed in modern man "is the expression of profound confusion and despair" (p. 200-1, MH). Fromm asks whether a belief in God is essential to faith, and whether we must return to religion or abandon faith altogether (p. 201, MH). He answers by *redefining* faith, since clearly, he himself has rejected God:

Faith for Fromm is "a basic attitude of a person, a character trait which pervades all his experiences, which enables a man to face reality without illusions and yet to live by his faith...an inner attitude *the specific object of which is of secondary importance*" (p. 201, MH, emphasis added).

Fromm's "faith" is a faith in *man*, not *God*. He makes a distinction between "rational" and "irrational" faith, the latter being:

"...the belief in a person, idea, or symbol which does not result from one's own experience of thought or feeling, but which is based on one's emotional submission to irrational authority." (p. 204, MH)

Fromm ignores here the revelation given by God in the Scriptures, and the fact that Christianity is founded on *eyewitness accounts* of such crucial events as the resurrection. It is not irrational at all, as implied here by Fromm, even though it does not arise solely out of the individual's thought, feeling, and experience. Fromm goes on to define "rational faith" as:

"...a firm conviction based on productive intellectual and emotional activity...rooted in one's own experience, in the confidence in one's power of thought, observation, and judgment" (p. 207-8, MH).

It is a faith in *self* that Fromm actively promotes, a faith that discourages any sort of dependence on others (even God) as the basis for one's own identity (p. 208, MH). Ultimately, it is a faith in *man*:

"Another meaning we have in the potentialities of others, of ourselves, and of mankind...faith in others has its culmination in faith in *mankind*." (p. 209, MH)

To the believer, it should be obvious that Fromm's faith is diametrically opposed to faith in Christ for eternal salvation!

The concept of *doubt* also receives much attention in Fromm's writings. He defines it for us:

"The psychoanalytic inquiry into the mechanisms of compulsive doubts shows that they are the rationalized expression of unconscious emotional conflicts, resulting from a lack of integration of the total personality and from an intense feeling of powerlessness and helplessness." (p. 202, MH)

"...an attitude of *indifference* in which *everything is possible, nothing is certain*." (p. 203, MH)

When doubt is "rational," it is concerned with emancipation from authority, questioning any belief dependent on an outside authority rather than on self (p. 203-4, MH). Fromm considers such "rational doubt" to have "an important function in personality development" (p. 203, MH).

Fromm believes that an atheist's faith in man is preferable to the believer's faith in God, and that it hardly differs from "mystic" faith in God:

"There is much less difference between a mystic faith in God and an atheist's rational faith in mankind than between the

former's faith and that of a Calvinist whose faith in God is rooted in the conviction of his own powerlessness and in his fear of God's power." (p. 212, MH)

Fromm has moved eons away from the Scripture. The believer is called to trust God and His Word absolutely. Eternal salvation is through faith alone, in Christ alone. This obviously requires a faith in something, or rather Someone, outside of self. The believer must not place faith in self or in other men, but test all human "wisdom" against the absolute truth of Scripture.

Fromm's ideas about religion, faith, and doubt are all in radical opposition to Scripture and must be rejected. It is unfortunate that he borrows and redefines these important terms.

Man's Death

Despite his faith in man, Fromm cannot deny death. He states that "the most fundamental existential dichotomy is that between life and death" (p. 50, MH). Rather than admitting that his faith in humanity is misplaced, he attempts to turn the tables:

"Man has tried to negate this dichotomy by ideologies, e.g., the Christian concept of immortality, which, by postulating an immortal soul, denies the tragic fact that man's life ends with death." (p. 51, MH)

But Fromm offers no hope. His faith is placed in man, who returns to the dust, and whose only hope is in the salvation offered by his Creator. Fromm rebels against the living God. He is the one who attempts to deny the mortality of man by equating him with God. It is at this point where his psychology is most tragic, because following in his footsteps leads to an eternity separated from God.

Man's "Freedom"

Fromm's radical view of man's freedom is a major theme of all his writings, and one of the most serious concerns. He promotes an extreme autonomy for man, one that frees him *even from God*. His view is founded on the assumption that although man is "a herd animal" or "sheep," he is also "endowed with reason which by its very nature is independent of the herd" (p. 58, PR). This assumption fails to account for the reality and seriousness of man's fall into sin, which Fromm has radically distorted.

Historical Development of "Freedom." Fromm defines "fixation" as "an emotional tie to a person binding one effectively to that person" (p. 72, YG). The "fixated" person is conscious only of love and the fear of rejection if he severs the tie (p. 72, YG). Fromm sees a stage of "fixation" along the road to man's ultimate "freedom:"

"In the process of the development of the human race, there was perhaps no other way to help man liberate himself from the incestuous ties to nature and clan than by requiring him to be obedient to God and his laws.... A further step in man's development enables him to acquire convictions and principles, and thus to be eventually 'true to himself,' rather than to be obedient to an authority." (p. 73, YG)

Fromm believes the "obedience stage" to be important because "obedience to God is also the negation of submission to man" (p. 73, YG), and leads later to autonomy:

"The idea of serfdom to God was, in the Jewish tradition, transformed into the basis for the freedom of man from man. *God's authority thus guarantees man's independence from human authority.*" (p. 75, YG)

Fromm proposes total independence to be the primary goal of man, "the ability to owe one's existence to oneself alone" (p. 75, YG). When raising the question of man's independence from God, he initially hedges but then claims to note a trend in Talmudic law, Hasidic literature, and other later Jewish literature:

"...to make man completely autonomous, even to the point where he will be free from God or, at least, where he can deal with God on terms of equality." (p. 77, YG)

Later in the same book he is even more explicit:

"Man is free and independent. He is even independent of God. Hence his sin is *his* sin, his return is *his* return, and there is no reason for his self-accusatory submission." (p. 169, YG)

Citing a story from Talmud: "It emphasizes the autonomy of man's reason with which even the supernatural voices from heaven cannot interfere." (p. 47, PR)

There are many, many places throughout Fromm's writings where he claims that man ought to be independent of God. Clearly, he exalts man to the throne of God and in doing so utters blasphemy against the sovereign Lord.

What is "freedom?" Earlier, we noted Fromm's belief that man's initial act of *disobedience* was the beginning of his autonomy, or freedom (p. 183, DC). Thus freedom is the *freedom to disobey*. Fromm claims that man "creates himself in the historical process which began with his first act of freedom" (p. 88, YG).

Freedom is also concerned with "liberating oneself from the primary ties that give security, yet cripple man" (p. 89, YG). Fromm even cites Jesus, in Matthew 10:35, as teaching "the

principle that man must break incestuous ties and become free in order to become human" (p. 81, PR). Freedom is thus related to risk. Note how this conflicts with some of the "security/significance" psychological teachings popular today. Fromm use of Matthew 10 is wholly inappropriate, as that passage teaches clearly the need to serve *others* and *not* exalt oneself. Fromm has gone off the deep end here, imposing onto Scripture the very opposite of its clear meaning.

However, Fromm gives brief recognition to man's limitations and dependence, which evidently are not considered incompatible with his freedom:

"It is one thing to recognize one's dependence and limitations, and it is something entirely different to indulge in this dependence, to worship the forces on which one depends." (p. 53, PR)

This brings to mind the teaching of Romans 1, that man has exchanged the worship of God for the worship of created things. It is right for man to worship God, on whom he depends for his very existence.

Freedom, according to Fromm, means that man follows *his own* reason, acting in accordance with self-interest, rather than his *passions*--but not the standards of God:

"Freedom is nothing other than the capacity to follow the voice of reason, of health, of well-being, of conscience, against the voices of irrational passions." (p. 167, HM)

"When ruled by passions, man is in bondage; when by reason, he is free.... Irrational passions are those which overpower man and compel him to act contrary to his true self-interests." (p. 166-7, HM)

This freedom involves the ability to choose between real alternatives of which the individual is aware, knowing the consequences of each choice (p. 184, HM). It is a freedom to choose between good and evil, but this capacity for choice may be lost (p. 165, YG).

Free Will or Determinism? Fromm discusses this question in terms of man's responsibility and potential for moral judgment. He claims that a child "starts his life in an indifferent moral state" (p. 232, MH). This, of course, defies the biblical truth of original sin, and thus Fromm's foundation for all that follows is cracked and untrustworthy.

He goes on to define the human will as "nothing but the expression of his character" (p. 234, MH). Elsewhere he says that:

"Man's actions are always caused by inclinations rooted in (usually unconscious) forces operating in his personality." (p. 184, HM)

This sounds deterministic, and indeed, Fromm's background is grounded in Freudian theory. However, he calls his position "realistic, critical humanism" (p. 191, HM)--not determinism, and not fatalism. He claims that:

"We are not...helpless victims of circumstance; we are, indeed, able to change and to influence forces inside and outside ourselves and to control, at least to some extent, the conditions which play upon us." (p. 234, MH)

Fromm also states that man is responsible to the extent that he is free to choose his actions, and that wrong choices "make us incapable of saving ourselves" (p. 194, HM). If he becomes indifferent, he also becomes unable to choose what is good (p. 194, HM).

Several major arguments against determinism are raised and refuted by Fromm (p. 158-9, HM), despite his insistence on man's autonomy. The first such argument is that God has given man free will. Fromm objects because this one requires belief in God!! The second objection is that responsibility for one's actions necessitates the freedom to choose those actions. To this one, Fromm replies that it is "born out of the wish to make man responsible so that he can be punished" (p. 159, HM). His convictions are further explained in another writing when he states that moral judgment is "based upon the idea of an authority transcending man and passing judgment on him" (p. 236, MH). Again, Fromm's atheism is at work. Third, man's consciousness of his freedom is often cited as evidence that it exists. Fromm responds:

"The problem of freedom of choice cannot be solved unless one considers that unconscious forces determine us, though leaving us with the happy conviction that our choice is a free one." (p. 159, HM)

Nowhere does Fromm present any satisfactory answers to the questions he raises. He wavers between Freudian psychic determinism, on the one hand, and a "godlike" autonomy on the other. At every turn, there is evidence of his rebellion against the living God. He wants his "freedom," his autonomy, and he rejects any sort of accountability before the Judge of the earth.

Revolution. Fromm contrasts the "revolutionary character" with another type of rebel, the "fanatic." The latter is "exceedingly narcissistic," idolizing and deifying a political, religious, or other cause to which he is committed. He is passionately submitted to "the Absolute" and "utterly unrelated to the world" (p. 141, DC).

The "rebel," in general, is:

"...the person who is deeply resentful of authority, for not being appreciated, for not being loved, for not being accepted. A rebel is one who wants to overthrow authority

because of his resentment and, as a result, to make himself the authority in place of the one he has overthrown." (p. 140, DC)

This is a rather striking description of the fall of man!

The "revolutionary" character, promoted by Fromm, is independent and free (p. 143, DC), capable of "disobedience with a virtue," fully able to say no (p. 149, DC). His exaltation of disobedience is made possible by calling it "obedience to another principle" (p. 150, DC). He claims that this "virtuous" disobedience is difficult in today's world, where man is frightened by powerful bureaucracies and the general "bigness" of everything (p. 152, DC). The "revolutionary," however, is "free and not servant to anyone" (p. 153, DC):

"He is a skeptic because he suspects ideologies as covering up undesirable realities. He is a man of faith because he believes in that which potentially exists, although it has not yet been born." (p. 153, DC)

The revolutionary "thinks, feels, and decides for himself" (p. 145, DC). He is "fully awakened," with "his own self being the source of his life" (p. 146, DC).

Fromm equates these definitions with "mental health and well-being" (p. 153, DC). He lumps together Buddha, Jesus, and Marx as examples, claiming that revolutionaries exist in politics, religion, art, and also philosophy (p. 151, DC).

On a broad level, Fromm cautions that "revolution" proceeds only at a slow pace over time:

"Revolution can succeed only in steps of time. Suffering produces rebellion; rebellion produces freedom from serfdom; freedom from may eventually lead to freedom to a new life without idolatry. But since there is no miraculous change of heart, each generation can take only one step." (p. 113, YG)

Fromm seems here to have borrowed heavily from Marx, who also proposed benefits for workers some distance in the future. Both of them fall short of the glorious eternal hope that is assured to the believer.

Conclusions. Fromm believes that modern man is an "easy prey for irrational value systems" because:

"The growing doubt of human autonomy and reason has created a state of moral confusion where man is left without the guidance of either revelation or reason." (p. 15, MH)

He places his hope in man, and man alone:

"No power transcending man can make a moral claim upon him. Man is responsible to himself for gaining or losing his life.

Only if he understands the voice of his conscience, can he return to himself." (p. 174, MH)

We must object! Man is not left without the guidance of God's revelation, the Scriptures! There is a "power transcending man" which makes a moral claim on him, the personal God revealed in those Scriptures. Man is not left to his own autonomous reason, which is rooted in sin, nor is he called to "return to himself." Fromm rebels against the "moral claim" upon him by the sovereign God of the Bible, and thus he holds down the truth in unrighteousness.

The radical autonomy demanded by Fromm is utterly opposed to Scripture. Man, apart from divine intervention, is dead in sins and trespasses, spiritually blind and spiritually dead. He is set free from sin, both its penalty and power, only by the Lord Jesus Christ. The man who serves Christ and submits to the law of God is the man who is truly free. Fromm's autonomous man, or "revolutionary character," is blinded and enslaved to sin, living in total delusion as to his spiritual state and eternal destiny.

Man's Goal, Potential, Purpose...Salvation

Fromm's rejection of God, along with his radical view of man's autonomy, are the foundation for his view of man's fundamental purpose and potential.

Becoming "Fully Human." Fromm states that the goal of man is "becoming fully human and thus losing the terror of separateness" (p. 151, HM), developing his powers of love and reason, returning to himself (p. 123, YG). He claims that this idea underlies various religions, including both Christianity and Islam--however:

"...as soon as man had heard the message he began to falsify it; instead of becoming fully human himself, he idolized God and dogmas as manifestations of the 'new goal,' thus substituting a figure or a word for the reality of his experience." (p. 151, HM)

Truthfully, it is Fromm who substitutes his own message for the real message of the Christian faith, wherein man is called to worship God but has exchanged that glory for the worship of created things, including himself.

Potential. Fromm exalts the reaching of one's potential in his discussions of man's basic purpose:

"Man's main task in life is to give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is. The most important product of his effort is his own personality." (p. 238, MH)

"Man has only one real interest and that is the full development of his potentialities, of himself as a human being." (p. 138, MH)

"While every human being is the bearer of all human potentialities, the short span of his life does not permit their full realization under even the most favorable circumstances." (p. 51, MH)

This is a horribly inadequate substitute for the goal of the Christian, who is being recreated in the image of Christ, by the power of God working in him! Note how Fromm admits that his goal cannot even be attained. But in the Bible, God promises the believer that his sanctification will one day be complete (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

How is man's goal achieved? Fromm admits that there remains ignorance about how man should live and "how the tremendous energies *within* man can be released and used productively" (p. 14, MH). This is a crucial admission, but not surprising in view of his rejection of God's absolute standards. It is important to note Fromm's admitted ignorance here, particularly since he has himself written volumes about *how man should live!* In fact, he makes some rather definite statements:

"Every human being, in order to survive, must be able to *accept* things from others, to *take* things, to *save*, and to *exchange*. He must also be able to *follow authority*, to *guide others*, to be *alone*, and to *assert himself*." (p. 119, MH)

This is an interesting contrast to most of Fromm's statements about the absolute autonomy of man.

At one point, Fromm comments that:

"Intellectual insight as such is not a sufficient condition for change...it only clears the way for those forces in him which strive for psychic health and happiness to operate and to become effective." (p. 225, MH)

So, for Fromm, insight offers only a little hope.

One condition that Fromm holds out as essential is that of putting self first:

"Man's aim is to be *himself* and the condition for attaining this goal is that man be *for himself*." (p. 17, MH)

The Christian, however, is called to *no longer live for himself*, but rather for the Lord who died and rose again for his salvation. Fromm is wrong (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Future Uncertainty. Fromm makes no guarantees about the future of man, because potential is not necessarily always realized (p. 219, MH). The tendency to live and grow may be thwarted and

turned into destructiveness (p. 218, MH). Based on his presumption that man is neither inherently good nor inherently evil, but a contradiction, Fromm states that "man can answer his dilemma, either in a regressive or in a progressive way" (p. 153, HM). The future, for Fromm, depends solely on man and thus is uncertain.

But for the Christian, the future depends on God and His promises as revealed in Scripture. Thus the future is absolutely assured. His individual salvation is guaranteed, and God has also spoken concerning the return of Christ and consummation of history. Ultimately, He will usher in the eternal state and overthrow all evil. The believer has a certain hope that is glaringly absent from Fromm's writings.

Unity and Equality. Fromm teaches an "equality" in "the great humanistic tradition," meaning that:

"We were equal in one sense: that every man is an end in himself and must not be a means for the end of anyone else."
(p. 163, DC)

However, such "equality" is not to be equated with sameness or loss of individuality (p. 164, DC):

"The danger of the nineteenth century was that of becoming slaves; the danger of the twentieth century is not that we become slaves but that we become robots." (p. 165, DC)

The *Christian*, by contrast, is aware of an equality that exists because all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Fromm's writings are permeated with teachings of "unity" that characterize New Age theology. He proposes that a "unity of the human race" is taught in Scripture--at creation, the time of Noah, and finally, in the prophets (p. 82, YG). He claims that *man's own efforts, not God*, will bring about this "new harmony" (p. 88, YG). He teaches that man ought to be proud because the conquest of nature is now a real possibility and thus he can conceive of "the unity of the human race" (p. 14, MH). Every person, he claims, "carries within himself that which mankind has been and that which it will be" (p. 115, HM).

His vision of the future is also one of *religious* unity:

"We cannot expect that all philosophical and religious differences would disappear. We would not even want this, since the establishment of one system claiming to be the 'orthodox' one might lead to another source of narcissistic regression." (p. 114, HM)

Instead, Fromm proposes a universal "creed" that clearly clashes with the Christian faith:

"The creed is that each individual carries all of humanity within himself, that the 'human condition' is one and the same for all." (p. 114, HM)

Fromm believes we must "enlarge our sphere of awareness" to achieve the state of religious unity he envisions. He defines our *consciousness* as being representative of society and our *unconscious* as "the universal man in each of us." It is the latter that he wishes to "enlarge" (p. 114, HM). He teaches that man is distinct from other life forms, and transcends those others, because he is "life aware of itself" (p. 147, HM). He proposes an increase in that awareness.

In addition, Fromm suggests we ought to declare "the highest holiday of the year" to be "the day of man" (p. 112, HM), with each person taking pride in being man, "a citizen of the world" (p. 110-1, HM). Clearly, he exalts man in place of God, once again revealing his allegiance to the serpent--the devil.

Fromm's writings came along a few decades before the popularity of the New Age movement. However, most of what he teaches seems to be a prelude to this widespread spiritual deception. Many people are perhaps unaware of the basic *atheism* that underlies this type of "spirituality." However, an analysis of Fromm's writings make it frighteningly clear that a denial of the true God, and thus *atheism*, undergirds New Age theology.

Salvation. Fromm's "salvation" is about as far from the biblical view as one might travel. For him, "salvation" does not require the worship of God or adherence to any particular religion (p. 51-2, YG), but only to not worship idols or blaspheme. Remember, however, that the God of the Bible is an "idol" to Fromm, who worships humanity. "Blasphemy," by his definition, is to "attack that which is symbolized by the concept of God" (p. 52, YG, emphasis added). But it is truly Fromm who blasphemes in his denial of the existence of God, calling Him a "concept" and exalting man in His place.

Fromm's "salvation" is also provisional, highly uncertain, and perhaps occurring only in the distant future (p. 154, YG):

"The position of 'the paradox of hope' is one of 'faith,' faith in the sense of certainty based on the inner experience of the goal, even though it has not yet been reached, and no proof exists that it ever will be." (p. 157, YG)

How one can have an "inner experience" of *certainty*, in the face of such *uncertainty*, is not adequately explained. The Christian, however, is assured of his eternal inheritance:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept

by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:3-5)

What a contrast!

Fromm's "salvation" also has nothing whatsoever to do with God's grace:

"In the Jewish view man is born with the capacity to sin, but he can return, find himself, and redeem himself by his own effort and without an act of grace from God." (p. 162, YG)

"God does not interfere in man's history by an act of grace, he does not change the nature of man, he does not change his heart." (p. 184, DC)

This is diametrically opposed to Scripture! God *does* intervene in man's history. If He did not, there would be no salvation for anyone! God *does* change the nature of man, conforming the Christian to the image of Christ. God *does* change the heart of man, giving him a new heart which is inclined toward Him. Salvation is fully His work, having nothing at all to do with the efforts, worth, or other merits of man (Ephesians 2:7-9). Fromm ought to choose a word other than "salvation" to describe his concept, because it is utterly opposed to biblical salvation.

Fromm even claims that happiness results from man's achieving of his own "salvation" and solving the problems of life:

"Happiness is the indication that man has found the answer to the problem of human existence; the productive realization of his potentialities and thus, simultaneously, being one with the world and preserving the integrity of his self."
(p. 192, MH)

By contrast, the Christian rejoices in what God has accomplished on the cross, the *free gift* of eternal salvation that is offered by God's grace.

Man's Ethics

Fromm once again introduces an authoritarian/humanistic distinction and prefers the latter. We encounter here additional evidence of his rejection of both God and His Word.

Ethics: What is it? Fromm defines ethics as the "science dealing with the ideals of human relatedness" (p. 155, DC), one which he claims provides universal standards:

"In great philosophical or religious tradition...ethics refers to a particular orientation which is rooted in man and which, therefore, is not valid in reference to this or that person or

to this or that situation but to all human beings."
(p. 156, DC)

However, Fromm rejects any eternal, absolute standard of truth, such as used by "authoritarian" systems, where:

"Ethical propositions are unquestionably and eternally true and neither permit nor warrant revision." (p. 239, MH)

He believes that any such claim to absolute truth:

"...has been superseded in all other fields of scientific thought, where it is generally recognized that there is no absolute truth but nevertheless that there are objectively valid laws and principles." (p. 239, MH)

As we will see, Fromm is highly inconsistent. He cannot coherently maintain the position just stated, and at the same time adhere to the *absolute standard* which he himself exalts. The Christian recognizes the absolute standards of God. *Fromm sees an absolute standard as arising from within man.*

Source of Ethical Standards. The believer looks to Scripture for standards related to his conduct. Fromm does not. He admits that psychoanalysis claims to have increased our knowledge of man, but *has not increased our knowledge of how man ought to live* (p. 16, MH). This is a major admission to be noted! Fromm rejects God's absolute standard for truth, but envisions a standard *equally absolute as arising from within man:*

"Valid ethical norms can be formed by man's reason and by it alone." (p. 16, MH)

"The sources of norms for ethical conduct are to be found in man's nature itself...moral norms are based upon man's inherent qualities...their violation results in mental and emotional disintegration." (p. 17, MH)

This standard is one of "humanistic ethics," which Fromm contrasts with "authoritarian ethics."

Authoritarian Ethics. The characteristics listed here should be familiar from the earlier study of authoritarian conscience and religion:

1. It "denies man's capacity to know what is good or bad" (p. 20, MH).
2. It "depends not on reason and knowledge but on awe of the authority and on the subject's feeling of weakness and dependence" (p. 20, MH).
3. It is claimed to be exploitative (p. 20, MH).

4. The "unforgivable sin" is rebellion. Thus, "the sin of Adam and Eve is not explained in terms of the act itself" but as disobedience (p. 22, MH).

5. The individual "acts under the illusion that his actions benefit his self-interest, though he actually serves everything else *but* the interests of his real self. Everything is important to him except his life and the art of living. He is for everything except for himself." (p. 28, MH)

Let us briefly review how Fromm's definitions *distort* Christianity. The Bible tells us that man is fallen into sin, and apart from divine revelation, he indeed is unable to discern between good and evil. He holds down the truth in unrighteousness. God's standards truly do *not* depend on man's reason or knowledge, but on God's authority. However, the key is not man's *feeling* of weakness and dependence. Man is weak and dependent on God. This is a reality, not a feeling! Man's sin is indeed rooted in his rebellion against God, and his salvation involves a repentance from that rebellion. Man was created to glorify God, not himself. He must be *for God*, not *for himself*. But in serving God and fulfilling his God-given purpose, he also is blessed.

Humanistic Ethics. It is not surprising that God is ignored and man exalted in this atheistic system of ethical standards:

1. "Man himself is both the norm giver and the subject of the norms." (p. 18-9, MH)

2. It is "not incompatible with rational authority." (p. 20, MH)

3. It assumes that "only man himself can determine the criterion for virtue and sin...the sole criterion of ethical value being man's welfare." (p. 22, MH)

4. "There is nothing higher and more dignified than human existence." (p. 23, MH)

5. "Good in humanistic ethics is the affirmation of life, the unfolding of man's powers. Virtue is responsibility toward his own existence. Evil constitutes the crippling of man's powers; vice is irresponsibility toward himself." (p. 29, MH)

6. "All evil strivings are directed against life and all good serves the preservation and unfolding of life." (p. 216, MH)

7. "Humanistic judgment of ethical values has the same logical character as a rational judgment in general. In

making value judgments one judges facts and does not feel one is godlike, superior, and entitled to condemn or forgive." (p. 227, MH)

8. "Understanding a person does not mean condoning; it only means that one does not accuse him as if one were God or a judge placed above him." (p. 238, MH)

The first few statements are obviously a denial of God and His revelation given in the Scriptures. Additional comments are hardly required. The last couple of quotes have a superficial resemblance to biblical statements about not judging others, lest you, too, be judged. However, Fromm's understanding is twisted. The believer can make an evaluation of another person's behavior--the outward behavior, never the inner man--solely on the basis of God's revealed standards. Problems arise when man adds his own standards to those given by God, or when he arrogantly refuses to recognize his own sin. The Christian who evaluates the behavior of another must always maintain an attitude of humility, and he is called to restore that other person in a humble, gentle spirit (Galatians 6:1-2). Fromm misunderstands what the Bible teaches, and sets up his own humanistic standards above what God has ordained.

Suppression and Repression. These two psychological terms are a key component of Fromm's concerns about ethics. He makes three distinctions concerning suppression: (1) suppression of the *acting* out of an impulse; (2) suppression of the *awareness* of that impulse; and (3) engaging in a "constructive fight" against the impulse (p. 227-8, MH). The second of these, Freud chose to call "repression" (p. 228, MH), and Fromm sees it as underlying "authoritarian ethics:"

"Repression of evil strivings is that kind of suppression upon which authoritarian ethics relies implicitly or explicitly as the safest road to virtue." (p. 228-9, MH)

Drawing some simple logical conclusions, we can see that Fromm would probably consider faithful Christians to be in "denial" of their "evil strivings." However, he fails to understand either the process of regeneration or the fact that the *unbeliever*--including himself--is spiritually dead in sins and trespasses.

Concerning the third alternative noted above, Fromm says:

"Emphasis is not on one's feeling of badness and remorse but on the presence and use of productive forces within man." (p. 230, MH)

"The aim of humanistic ethics is not the repression of man's evilness which is fostered by the crippling effect of the authoritarian spirit, but the productive use of man's inherent primary potentialities." (p. 230, MH)

In the Christian, however, the emphasis is on his union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. The believer is thus empowered to live a new life (Romans 6:1-14).

Psychoanalysis and Ethics. Fromm believes that the development of humanistic ethics as a science is dependent on the development of psychology as a science (p. 39, MH). However, he notes the confusion resulting from Freud's relativism, wherein it is assumed that:

"...psychology can help us to understand the motivation of value judgments but can not help in establishing the validity of the value judgments themselves." (p. 42-3, MH)

In the Freudian system, conscience is "nothing but "internalized authority", and "morality is essentially a reaction formation against the evil inherent in man" (p. 43, MH). Fromm calls Freud's Oedipal theory a "secularized version of the concept of 'original sin'" (p. 44, MH). The differences between Freud and Fromm, in the matter of ethics, can be understood in terms of their basic orientation toward the nature of man. Freud held a negative view of man's nature, while Fromm sees neither inherent good nor evil, yet generally exalts man. But both deny God!

Nevertheless, Fromm sees some hope arising from the Freudian tradition because:

"Freud continues the tradition of thought which, since Buddha and Socrates, believes in truth as the power that makes man virtuous and free." (p. 44, MH)

This is a gross distortion of the teaching of Jesus in John 8. The truth to which He referred, which indeed makes man free from his bondage to sin, is the truth of the gospel. This is the very truth denied by Freud, Fromm, Buddha, Socrates, numerous philosophers, and modern psychologists in general. Man does not become truly free by looking within himself for "truth," contrary to the teachings of modern psychology!

Let us conclude here by simply noting that psychology is not a value-free science that studies man from an objective and neutral position. The writings of Fromm (and many others) evidence the fact that psychologists impose a distinct system of values on man--values which deny God and His values.

Fromm and Christianity

Like his predecessor Freud, Fromm concocts an "explanation" for the Christian faith, to which he is intensely hostile! For this section, we will specifically examine his book, *The Dogma of Christ*, written at a time when Fromm considered himself strictly Freudian. While later departing from Freud in some ways, he

continues to stand by this book as originally composed. Here are statements of his purpose(s) in writing the book:

"The present investigation is concerned with a narrow limited problem of social psychology, namely, the question concerning the motives conditioning the evolution of concepts about the relation of God the Father to Jesus from the beginning of Christianity to the formulation of the Nicene Creed in the fourth century." (p. 20)

To study "...the extent to which the change in certain religious ideas is an expression of the psychic change of the people involved and the extent to which these changes are conditioned by their conditions of life." (p. 20)

"...to show that the evolution of dogma can be understood only through knowledge of the unconscious." (p. 20)

"...to understand dogma on the basis of a study of people, not people on the basis of a study of dogma." (p. 31)

"Our purpose here is to understand the change in certain contents of consciousness as expressed in theological ideas as the result of a change in unconscious processes." (p. 22)

Fromm plans to describe "the social class from which the early Christian faith originated, and to understand the psychological meaning of this faith in terms of the total psychic situation of these people." (p. 31)

This is claimed to be a study in *social* psychology, rather than *individual* psychology, a field which:

"...wishes to investigate how certain psychic attitudes common to members of a group are related to their common life experiences." (p. 20)

Fromm believes that "the history of religion reflects the history of man's spiritual evolution" (p. 11). However, note his definition of *religion*:

"An illusion shared by everyone becomes a reality. The oldest of these collective fantasy satisfactions is religion." (p. 30)

Fromm references Freud's teaching that religion is a "narcotic" that consoles man in the face of his helplessness before nature (p. 27), and goes on to equate religion with a societal satisfaction offered to compensate man for the renunciation of his pleasures (p. 29). Underlying his view of religion is the basic assumption that the "psychic structure" of man, in particular the "neurotic," can

only be understood in the context of early childhood (p. 19). In a parallel manner, Fromm attempts to explain both the origins and development of the Christian faith.

"Explanation" of Christianity. Most importantly, Fromm views early Christianity as "hostile to authority and to the state" (p. 67):

"The first Christians were no more 'humble' and resigned to the will of God, no more convinced of the necessity and immutability of their lot, no more inspired by the wish to be loved by their rulers than were the political and military fighters." (p. 49)

He sees Christianity as "an expression of hostility to the father," corresponding to the "obsessional" or "irrational compulsive" thinking of the individual "neurotic" (p. 85). He calls early Christians "tormented and despairing...full of hatred for their Jewish and pagan oppressors, with no prospect of effecting a better future" (p. 52). Therefore:

"A message which would allow them to project into fantasy all that reality had denied them must have been extremely fascinating." (p. 52)

Thus Fromm seeks to investigate Christianity psychoanalytically, to determine the "unconscious resources" and "emotional needs" being satisfied, to know why so many believed this "fantasy" of "a man raised to a god...adopted by God" (p. 53). He believes that his study does in fact explain the faith as a fantasy functioning in place of real gratification (p. 90).

Social poverty and political revolutionary aspirations are central to Fromm's perception of early Christianity. He claims the revolutionary aspect to be a reaction to social conflicts within Palestinian Judaism (p. 35). In time, as the church struggled against Roman rule, the political nature of this "revolution" turned to religious and messianic fantasies (p. 38). More specifically:

"In the early community of enthusiasts, Jesus was thus a man exalted after his death into a god who would soon return in order to execute judgment, to make happy those who suffer, and to punish the rulers." (p. 52)

Fromm also neatly "explains" the Christian concept of adoption:

"Adoption is here used in contrast to the natural sonship which exists from birth. Accordingly, the thought present here is that Jesus was not messiah from the beginning; in other words, he was not from the beginning the Son of God, but became so only by a definite, very distinct act of God's will." (p. 50, citing Psalm 2:7 and Acts 13:33)

Summarizing Fromm's "explanation" of Christianity:

"Conscious hatred was reserved for the authorities, not for the elevated father figure, the divine being himself. But the unconscious hostility to the divine father found expression in the Christ fantasy. They put a man at God's side and made him a co-regent with God the father. This man who became a god, and with whom as humans they could identify, represented their Oedipus wishes; he was a symbol of their unconscious hostility to God the father, for if a man could become God, the latter was deprived of his privileged fatherly position of being unique and unreachable. The belief in the elevation of man to god was the expression of an unconscious wish for the removal of the divine father." (p. 54)

Thus, claims Fromm:

"If they thought of this crucified one as elevated to god, this meant that in their unconscious, this crucified god was themselves." (p. 54)

God the Father is "displaced...by identification with the suffering Jesus" (p. 55).

The blasphemy inherent in these quotes should be obvious to every believer! *Fromm's atheism is presupposed in all of this.* He overlooks even the possibility that the God of the Bible exists and that the message of the Christian gospel is the truth, based on historically accurate accounts and God's explanations of those events. We know from Romans 1, however, that Fromm cannot deny God in his heart of hearts, but rather, in his hatred of the living God, he *holds down the truth in unrighteousness.*

"Transformation" of Christianity. Most early Christians, Fromm claims, were poor and uneducated (p. 43). The initial message, he says, was an imminent promise of wealth for the poor, food for the hungry, and authority for the oppressed (p. 46). However, in addition to turning "propaganda" outward toward the pagans (p. 57), an educated, wealthy social element was added to the church (p. 58). When eventually it became the state religion under Constantine, "it had already become the religion of larger circles of the ruling class in the Roman Empire" (p. 60).

Fromm believes that eschatological expectations gradually disappeared (p. 62), along with other doctrinal changes transforming Christianity into *another religion*, but the transformation was concealed by "the new Catholic religion" (p. 62).

With the decrease in eschatological expectations, Fromm says that Christians began to look back rather than forward (p. 64). Continued development also led to the view that: "A man was not elevated to a god, but a god descended to become man" (p. 66). Fromm considers this a decisive point which "changed the tension between God and his Son into harmony" and "avoided the concept that

man could become God" (p. 67). In addition, it eliminated the initial revolutionary aspirations and the hostility to the father (p. 68). Fromm explains that:

"The adoptionist, anti-authoritarian theory concerning the man who became God was discarded, and Jesus became the pre-existent only-begotten Son of God, of one nature with him and yet a second person beside him." (p. 80)

"The idea that a man became a god was a symbol of aggressive, active, hostile-to-the-father tendencies. The idea that God became a man was transformed into a symbol of the tender, passive tie to the father." (p. 68)

"The formula of passive submission replaced the active hostility to the father. It was not necessary to displace the father, since the son had indeed been equal to God from the beginning, precisely because God himself had 'emitted' him." (p. 69)

Fromm concludes that there must exist an "unconscious meaning" in the "logical contradiction that two are equal to one" (p. 72). (Note his ignorance of the Trinity. Not two, but three are equal to One!)

At the same time, similar changes occurred in attitudes toward human "father figures" such as priests and political rulers (p. 69). "Aggressive impulses" were turned away from these external authorities and now directed inward, toward the self (p. 70). Fromm claims the following results:

"They must reproach themselves if they are unhappy. Only through constant expiation, only through personal suffering could they atone for their guilt and win the love and pardon of God and of his earthly representatives." (p. 70)

For the rulers, the suffering of Jesus:

"...relieved them of the guilt feelings they experienced because of the distress and suffering of the masses whom they had oppressed and exploited." (p. 71)

Fromm grossly misunderstands and mutilates the Christian faith, in terms of both its history and doctrine. He judges the motives of the early Christians without correctly understanding biblical teachings about submission to governmental authorities, even those that are harsh. He fails to understand the godly, loving attitudes that are to characterize the believer. While mentioning early heresies, including Montanism, Gnosticism, Arianism, and such, he overlooks the church's hammering out of key doctrines such as the Trinity. We must reject this blasphemous, psychologized "explanation" of our faith.

"Explanations" Multiplied: Mary. Fromm devotes significant space to a consideration of Mary, believing he can explain Christianity even more fully--and doing more damage than he has already done! He claims that the "two equal to one" contradiction, noted earlier, can be explained by "the situation of the child in its mother's womb" (p. 72). He "explains" baby Jesus:

"The strong, powerful father has become the sheltering and protecting mother; the once rebellious, then suffering and passive son has become the small child." (p. 72)

Mary, Fromm says, "represents that motherly divinity grown independent by separating itself from the father-god" (p. 73). Mary was gradually deified as "the historical human Jesus receded in favor of the pre-existent Son of God" (p. 73). Fromm believes he has found the key to unlock the mysteries of both the suffering and infant Jesus:

"In the fantasy of the crucified Jesus, pardon is obtained by a passive, self-castrating submission to the father. In the fantasy of the child Jesus on the breast of the Madonna, the masochistic element is lacking; in place of the father one finds the mother who, while she pacifies the child, grants pardon and expiation." (p. 74)

But nowhere in Scripture does Mary provide pardon and expiation. Only Jesus Christ, in His death and resurrection, makes possible the forgiveness of sins. In all of these "explanations," Fromm reveals only the depths of his own sinful, unbelieving heart.

Religion and Psychoanalysis

Unlike too many Christians today, Fromm acknowledges that psychotherapy and religion occupy the same basic territory:

"As a physician of the soul he (the psychologist) is concerned with the very same problems as philosophy and theology: the soul of man and its cure." (p. 7, PR, emphasis added)

Fromm believes that it is fallacious to "set up alternatives of either irreconcilable opposition or identity of interest" between psychology and religion (p. 9, PR). This does not, however, negate the admission just made, because Fromm *rejects God* as essential to religion:

"It is not true that we have to give up the concern for the soul if we do not accept the tenets of religion...the question is not whether man returns to religion and believes in God but whether he lives love and thinks truth." (p. 9, PR)

Fromm's "religion" is a godless idolatry of man. Psychoanalysis is founded on this "religion" and all of its assumptions about God and man.

Freud, Jung, and Religion. In his writings on the relationship between religion and psychoanalysis, Fromm makes a comparison of Freud and Jung, rejecting the commonly held belief that Freud was against religion and Jung for it (p. 10, PR). He calls Freud's blasphemous *Future of an Illusion* "one of his most profound and brilliant books," and he credits Jung as the "first psychoanalyst to understand that myth and religious ideas are expressions of profound insights" (p. 10, PR).

Fromm makes every attempt to redeem Freud's anti-religious reputation. Freud objects to religion on several grounds. He calls it an "illusion based on man's wishes" (p. 12, PR), claims that it "puts morality on very shaky grounds" (p. 13, PR), and believes that it "sanctifies bad human institutions" and prohibits "critical thinking" (p. 12, PR). However, Fromm says, Freud *does* believe in "brotherly love, truth, and freedom" (p. 13, PR), and these he considers "the ethical core of all great religions" (p. 18, PR). On this basis, Fromm states:

"Freud speaks in the name of the ethical core of religion and criticizes the theistic-supernatural aspects of religion for preventing the full realization of these ethical aims."
(p. 19, PR)

It is only by a complete redefinition of religion, one that opposes the Christian faith, that Fromm can consider Freud to be supportive of religion. Freud does, however, make no pretense about his desire to deal with the ultimate concerns of life:

"In my youth I felt an overpowering need to understand something of the riddles of the world in which we live, and perhaps even to contribute something to their solution."
(p. 133, DC, quotation of Freud)

What Freud did, however, was to launch vicious attacks on religion in general, and Christianity in particular (see "Freudian Frauds" paper). Fromm acknowledges that his psychoanalytic movement "exhibited a fanaticism usually found only in religious and political bureaucracies" (p. 125, DC).

Jung is another story. He considers something "psychologically true" if the idea exists (p. 15, PR). Therefore:

"He advocates a standpoint of relativism which, though on the surface more friendly to religion than Freud's, is in its spirit fundamentally opposed to religions like Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism"--religions which focus on "striving for truth." (p. 16, PR)

For Jung, "the essence of religious experience is the submission to powers higher than ourselves" (p. 17, PR). Fromm claims this to be consistent with the teachings of Luther and Calvin, but not with Buddhism (p. 19, PR), and not with Freud, who is claimed to state "that the feeling of powerlessness is the opposite of religious feeling" (p. 14, PR).

Knowing Fromm's exaltation of man's autonomy, and his view of humanistic religion, Jung's religious views are unacceptable to him. For the Christian, however, Freud, Jung, and Fromm are all unacceptable. All three of them deny the God of Scripture, though their methods differ.

Religious Intolerance. Like many today, Fromm rejects the idea of any claim to exclusive truth in religion:

"No man can presume to have any knowledge of God which permits him to criticize or condemn his fellow men or to claim that his own idea of God is the only right one." (p. 116, PR)

Fromm believes that such intolerance has had "a devastating effect on religious development," leading to "a new form of idolatry" (p. 116-7, PR). However, he overlooks the fact that a number of conflicting viewpoints about the nature of God cannot all be correct at the same time! Even more to the point, however, is the biblical reality that he is holding down the truth about the God he knows he cannot escape.

Religious Unity. A companion to contempt for intolerance is the belief that all religions teach basically the same truth about love, truth, and justice (p. 63, PR). In discussing his view of the "full maturity of man," Fromm states that:

"This goal of mental development which is thus expressed in psychological terms is essentially the same as that which the great spiritual leaders of the human race have expressed in religious-spiritual terms." (p. 109-110, HM)

This "goal," however, is not the goal of Christian sanctification. Fromm anticipates the monism of the New Age movement when he says that the mystics describe:

"...an attitude of oneness not only in oneself, not only with one's fellow men, but with all life and, beyond that, with the universe." (p. 95, PR)

This sort of "unity" (pantheism) does not exist, and blatantly denies the Creator/creature distinction of Scripture. New Agers would applaud Fromm, but Christians must reject his views.

Guilt. Fromm discusses guilt in relationship to psychoanalysis:

"The problem of guilt plays no less a role in psychoanalytic procedure than it does in religion...the feeling of guilt has

overpowered some patients' minds" with a "sense of inferiority, of depravity...a conscious or unconscious desire for punishment." (p. 90, PR)

Note the admission of a significant overlap between religion and psychotherapy, *which is a substitute religion, not a science*. The distinctly *religious* nature of psychotherapy should be more clearly acknowledged, so that believers are not deceived into thinking that it deals with a separate compartment of life.

Some people in analysis, Fromm notes, are not bothered by any guilt at the outset, *but a sense of guilt is uncovered in therapy* (p. 91, PR). Again, note the parallel to Christianity, where the sinner must come to a recognition of his guilt before God. Psychoanalysis is a disastrous substitute for coming to Christ in faith!

The solution to guilt, according to Fromm, involves listening to one's own conscience, leading to "peace with one's conscience," which is a "continuous sensitivity to our conscience and readiness to respond to it" (p. 93, PR). Here we have a deceitful counterfeit of *peace with God*, and a conscience that has been cleansed by the blood of Christ!

Truth. Fromm says that Freudian psychoanalysis has "made possible the most minute and intimate study of the soul" (p. 7, PR), and furthermore:

"Psychoanalysis has given the concept of truth a new dimension.... The psychoanalytic process is in itself a search for truth...not outside of man but in man himself." (p. 76, PR)

"Man's ability to search for the truth is held to be inseparably linked to the attainment of *freedom* and *independence*." (p. 79, PR)

Fromm believes that in the modern world, psychoanalysis should regain "its original daring in the search for truth" and "cease to be governed by a sterile bureaucracy" (p. 136, DC). Concerning Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, he says that:

"His aim was the control of irrational passions by reason; the liberation of man from passion, within human possibilities. He studied the sources of the passions in order to help man to dominate them. His aim was *truth*, the knowledge of reality; to him this knowledge was man's only guiding light on earth." (p. 135, DC, emphasis added)

Freud "made 'the truth shall make you free' the guiding principle of a new therapy." (p. 7, PR)

This is deadly! Truth is determined by God, not man! Freud's real aim was to hold down the truth about the living God, who he

clearly hated. Man's only "guiding light on earth" is not his own autonomous, sinful reasoning, but the revelation God has graciously provided.

The Unconscious. The religious nature of this unscientific, unbiblical concept needs to be exposed. Fromm discusses the definitions proposed by Freud, Jung, and himself. To Freud, the "unconscious" is "bad, repressed," but to Jung, it is the "source of revelation" (p. 96, PR), a distinctly religious concept where insanity would be considered a religious phenomenon (p. 17-8, PR). Note how Jung's definition replaces Scripture, and differs little from Fromm's admonitions about looking within oneself for "truth." However, Fromm claims to differ with both Freud and Jung, stating that the unconscious:

"...is closely related to the religious experience of breaking down individuation and feeling one with the all." (p. 96, PR)

"...contains both the lowest and the highest, the worst and the best." (p. 97, PR)

Fromm's concept is just as religious as that of Jung, and it is a key to change:

"In getting in touch with this dissociated world of the unconscious one replaces the principle of repression by that of permeation and integration." (p. 97, PR)

All of this is mentioned primarily to emphasize that the "unconscious" is not a scientific, neutral concept, but one with distinctly religious overtones.

Symbolism and Rituals. Fromm claims that psychoanalysts have noted the "similarity of the private compulsive rituals" of neurotics to "the socially patterned ceremonies they found in religion" (p. 107, PR). According to their theories, "unconscious drives" underlie both religion and neurosis, the latter being "explained as a particular form of religion differing mainly by its individual, non-patterned characteristics" (p. 57, MH).

Rituals are defined as "shared actions expressive of common strivings rooted in common values" (p. 108, PR). A ritual may be either "irrational," serving to "ward off repressed impulses," or "rational," one which "expresses strivings" (p. 108, PR). Fromm claims that psychoanalysis can make the distinction between the two and provide an understanding of the "psychological roots" underlying the need for ritualistic action (p. 109, PR).

Symbolic language is characteristic of dreams, but also "employed in myths and religious thinking" (p. 111, PR). Fromm claims it to be "the only universal language" (p. 111, PR). He says that Freud has "made this forgotten language accessible to us," thus laying the foundation for "a new understanding of religious symbols in myth, dogma, and ritual" (p. 112, PR). This "new understanding," Fromm claims, "does lead to a new appreciation

of the profound and significant wisdom expressed by religion in symbolic language" (p. 113, PR).

The Bible does use symbolic language in places, such as the book of Revelation, to express God's truth. The Christian engages in some "rituals," such as the Lord's Supper. However, psychoanalysis offers no profound or accurate insights such as claimed by Fromm. His claims exalt the standards of psychoanalysis--standards rooted in the presupposition of atheism--above the standards of the sovereign Lord. This is unacceptable to the Christian.

Goals of Psychoanalysis. Fromm claims that Freud introduced changes in the basic goals of therapy, so that mere symptom removal was replaced by a "process of character reorientation" (p. 66, PR). Rather than aiming at social adjustment and reduction in the relative level of suffering, Fromm advocates therapy directed toward the "optimal development" of man (p. 74, PR). He says that this view *assumes* that:

"...there are immutable laws inherent in human nature and human functioning which operate in any given culture."
(p. 74, PR)

Fromm considers psychoanalysis to have a *religious function* as the cure of the soul (p. 76, PR), aiming to achieve "independence, integrity, and the ability to love" (p. 74, PR), along with recognition of truth and becoming "fully human" and listening to the voice of one's own conscience (p. 76, PR). Fromm believes that the goals of therapy represent a "common core of ideas and norms" in humanistic religions (p. 76, PR).

Most significantly, Fromm claims that psychoanalysis contributes to the goals of religion, the "unfolding of his (man's) powers of love and reason," and thus is no threat to religion (p. 99, PR):

"As for the social sciences, their growing understanding of man's nature and of the laws governing his existence contributes to the development of a religious attitude rather than threatens it." (p. 100, PR)

Bear in mind, however, that Fromm *redefines religion!* God's Word gives man the understanding that he needs regarding his own nature and the laws--established by his Creator--that "govern his existence." Fromm promotes a complete *godless religion*:

"The more man understands and masters nature the less he needs to use religion as a scientific explanation and as a magical device for controlling nature. If mankind is able to produce enough to feed all men, it does not need to pray for daily bread." (p. 104, PR)

Finally, note Fromm's statements about the goals of Freud:

"He wanted to conquer the world with his rationalistic-puritan dogma and to lead man to the only--and very limited--salvation he was capable of: the conquest of passion by intellect. To Freud, this--not any religion or any political solution like socialism--was the *only* valid answer to the problem of man."
(p. 135, DC)

It is critical for believers to realize that psychology offers a *counterfeit religion, a counterfeit salvation*. It could hardly be stated more emphatically than it is in this quote. Psychoanalysis and the *Christian* faith are radically opposed. They are mutually exclusive, wholly incompatible.

Fromm's "Future"...The "Messianic Time"

Fromm promotes a "prophetic concept of peace" which he considers a "spiritual and philosophical concept" (p. 183, DC). It is "not merely the absence of war," but rather it is:

"...based on the prophetic idea of man, of history, and of salvation...has its roots in the story of man's creation and his disobedience to God as related in the Book of Genesis, and it culminates in the concept of the messianic time."
(p. 183, DC)

Fromm defines "prophet" as "a revealer of truth," lumping Buddha and Lao-tse together with the biblical prophets of the Old Testament (p. 118, YG). The following four functions of Fromm's "prophet" are closely tied to his hopes for the future of man:

1. To announce to the people that "man's goal is to become fully man" or rather "to become like God."
2. To "show man alternatives" along with the "consequences of these alternatives."
3. To "dissent and protest when man takes the wrong road" yet "not abandon the people."
4. To think not of *individual* salvation but the salvation of society as a whole. (p. 117, YG)

Fromm speaks extensively of a "messianic time," which is basically equivalent to the "prophetic concept of peace." It is a time "when man will have been fully born" (p. 123, YG). It is to be ushered in by man's efforts--not God's grace:

"The messianic time is not brought about by an act of grace or by an innate drive within man toward perfection. It is

brought about by the force generated by man's existential dichotomy: being part of nature and yet transcending nature; being animal and yet transcending animal nature." (p. 123, YG)

This time is to involve a "return to innocence," and yet, says Fromm, "it is no return at all, because it is the goal toward which man strives after having lost his innocence" (p. 124, YG).

Fromm stresses the new harmony between man, nature, and other people expected in the "messianic time" he hopes for:

"Men will not only cease to destroy each other, man will have overcome the experience of separateness between one nation and another." (p. 129, YG)

The biblical concept of *atonement* for sin, and peace with *God*, is mutilated and replaced in Fromm's system:

"In order to have peace man must first find at-onement; peace is the result of a change within man in which union has replaced alienation." (p. 126, YG)

Fromm's atheism, and his redefinition of God as a "concept," is again a prominent feature:

"When peace and freedom have been established, it will matter little which thought concepts mankind uses to give expression to its supreme goals and values." (p. 129, YG)

"Salvation" is grossly distorted and not viewed as an *individual* matter, again contrasting with Scripture:

"Salvation is not individual but collective; it is either a new historical period or the cataclysmic end of all history. In both cases it refers to a change in the situation of mankind, rather than to a change in the fate of one individual." (p. 135, YG)

Concerning biblical *messianic psalms*: "It is not the mood of contentment, righteousness, or despair, but in the messianic psalms the mood is one of faith in the salvation of mankind." (p. 221, YG)

Similarly, Fromm envisions man creating a "sane society" in which to live:

"Man can protect himself from the consequences of his own madness only by creating a sane society which conforms to the needs of man...in which man relates to man lovingly, in which he is rooted in bonds of brotherliness and solidarity." (p. 102, DC)

"Building such a society means taking the next step; it means the end of 'humanoid' history, the phase in which man has not yet become fully human. It does not mean the 'end of days,' the 'completion,' the state of perfect harmony in which no conflicts or problems confront man." (p. 102, DC)

The role of Jesus Christ as the anticipated *Messiah*, dying for the sins of His people, is clearly denied by Fromm:

"The messiah is never the 'savior;' he does not transform man, nor change his substance. The messiah is always a symbol, the anointed king from the House of David, who will make his appearance when the time has come. In this very fact that the messiah is a symbol of a new *historical* period, and not a savior, lies one decisive difference between the Jewish concept and the one developed by the Christian Church." (p. 138, YG)

"The messiah does not bring salvation...salvation is not dependent on the 'birth pangs of the messiah,' but on the readiness of the people, provided they make the choice; hence, the messiah might appear at any minute." (p. 139, YG)

"The Messiah is not the savior. He is not sent by God in order to save the people or to change their corrupt substance. The Messiah is a symbol of man's own achievement. When man has achieved union, when he is ready, then the Messiah will appear. The Messiah is not the Son of God any more than every man is God's child: he is the anointed king who represents the new epoch of history." (p. 187, DC)

These statements could hardly be more precisely the *opposite* of all that the Bible says concerning Jesus Christ the Messiah!

Despite his denial of our Lord's sacrifice for sin, Fromm believes that guilt will no longer be a problem in his "messianic time:"

"The problem of guilt will disappear; but with this disappears also the problem of good works. He does not need good works to justify himself--because he has become fully himself." (p. 139, YG)

This view *assumes* atheism and arrogantly presumes that man is adequate in himself.

Fromm abuses the biblical view of the Sabbath to claim support for his anti-biblical concepts. He sees the Sabbath as "man's defeat of time, sadness, and death" (p. 194, YG), offering these definitions:

"The Sabbath is the anticipation of the messianic time, which is sometimes called 'the time of the perpetual Sabbath;' but it is not purely the *symbolic* anticipation of the messianic time--it is its real precursor." (p. 197, YG)

"On the Sabbath, man is fully man, with no task other than to be human. In the Jewish tradition it is not work which is a supreme value, but rest, the state that has no other purpose than that of being human." (p. 198, YG)

Thus Fromm substitutes a state of "being human" for the state of eternal rest in heaven that is promised to believers. "Rest," to Fromm, is "a state of peace between man and nature" while "work...is any interference by man, be it constructive or destructive, with the physical world" (p. 196, YG).

Basically, Fromm's future "hope" is one of *man's return to himself* (p. 191, DC), rather than *man's return to God*. This is a diabolical substitution. He says that:

"Once we are all awake, there need no longer be any prophets or revolutionary characters--there will be only fully developed human beings." (p. 153, DC)

But man's problem is not one of spiritual *slumber*. Because of the fall into sin, which Fromm turns upside down, man is spiritually *dead in sins and trespasses*, apart from the eternal salvation offered by the God revealed in the Scriptures, based on the shed blood of His Son, the Messiah, Jesus Christ. To those who know Christ as Lord and Savior, God promises eternal rest in heaven.

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