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UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN MIND AND HOW SATAN ATTEMPTS TO INFLUENCE US

We understand that there is a powerful spirit being who in the Bible is called "Satan", and whose express goal it is to do whatever he can to destroy mankind. He is the adversary of God and he is also our adversary. His main focus is to influence our minds and the minds of all human beings alive. To be in a position to effectively resist that influence from Satan, it is helpful for us to understand the human mind and exactly how Satan attempts to tempt us into breaking God's laws. After all, Paul tells us:

"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for WE ARE NOT IGNORANT OF HIS DEVICES." (2 Corinthians 2:11 AV)

To "not be ignorant of Satan's devices", we need to understand how he seeks to influence our minds.

So let's take a closer look at our minds. Our foundation for any understanding about the human mind must be the Bible, God's instruction manual for mankind. In the Bible we will see not only how Satan attempts to get through to us, but we will also see some very clear limitations that Satan has in his dealings with mankind.

So let's start off with some basics.

THE MAIN DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANIMALS AND HUMANS

Animals have a brain, which is largely controlled by what we call "instinct". By "instinct" we mean that animals to a large degree have pre-programmed ways of responding to most of the situations they are likely to be exposed to in the course of their lives. Thus instinct eliminates the need for animals to have to make conscious individual decisions; instinct provides them with spontaneous responses which will be appropriate for most situations they will encounter. This is not to say that animals cannot be taught to respond to certain situations in ways that might be contrary to their natural instinct. But this instinct eliminates the need for animals to have "a mind".

Human beings do not have such "instinct". Instead, our brains are influenced and guided by a spirit, which we refer to as "the spirit in man". This spirit in man, combining with our brains, gives us "a human mind". This human mind is not pre-programmed to respond in specific ways to specific situations, and it is far more complex than the instinct an animal has to guide it through its life. The human mind is thus forced to make decisions for situations in which an animal's instinct would provide spontaneous responses.

However:

While the human mind does not START OUT being in any way pre-programmed, it is nevertheless **HIGHLY IMPRESSIONABLE AND VERY READILY PROGRAMMED FOR FUTURE BEHAVIOUR IN ANY GIVEN SITUATION!**

This is important to understand! Once the impressionable human mind HAS been programmed to respond in certain ways, THEN such responses function almost identically to the way instinct functions in an animal. I say "almost identically" because while such programmed responses may be spontaneous,

the mind nevertheless still has the ability to override such spontaneous responses.

So the human mind is trained, programmed and developed by both, conscious and unconscious decisions. And while the mind develops, and more and more responses to various situations become "habitual" or "instinctive", yet the ability to make individual decisions contrary to such habitual responses is never removed. The mind continues to be CONSTANTLY faced with the need to make decisions about conduct and behaviour. The end-result is something that is VASTLY SUPERIOR to what an animal with instinct is capable of.

With that brief background, let's look at what Satan wants to do to us.

TWO WAYS IN WHICH SATAN TRIES TO INFLUENCE US

From the above description the two main ways Satan will attack us should be easy to identify.

1) Satan's first and foremost goal is to reach our highly impressionable, and at birth as yet un-programmed, minds for the express purpose of PRE-PROGRAMMING OUR MINDS WITH SPECIFIC RESPONSES TO COMMON LIFE SITUATIONS! It is his goal to pre-program our minds with responses that will then be "NATURALLY" hostile to God and God's laws and God's ways. God designed our minds to be receptive to programming with specific ways of responding to situations, and Satan simply tries to "load his copyrighted software into our minds" before any other software has been installed in it. Or, to make the analogy more accurate, at this stage it is Satan's goal to load HIS OPERATING SYSTEM into our minds, before we ever realize that GOD is actually offering mankind a far better operating system to run the human mind. God's operating system, when compared to Satan's operating system, is a bit more difficult to install initially; but once properly installed it is infinitely superior to Satan's operating system. The two operating systems are not really compatible with each other. And so God's software simply cannot run on Satan's operating system. However, it IS possible for much of Satan's software to run in a mind functioning by God's operating system. Therefore a mind running on God's operating system must ALWAYS have its "anti-virus software" running in the background, checking all incoming thoughts, some of which may very well be disguised like the "I love you" computer virus.

2) Whether or not we human beings have accepted his operating system for our minds, Satan then tries to IN ADDITION also influence those decisions we are faced with that fall outside of our habitual, or "instinctive", responses. He uses various different methods to exert such influence on us.

As far as "the methods" Satan uses to influence our decisions are concerned, there are many unwarranted fears many people have. Some people fear that Satan may be able to influence our "sub-conscious mind". Other people speculate about "subliminal seduction", and about things like "back-masking" (where a music record supposedly has a subversive message recorded on it which can only be heard if the piece is played backwards, but which the mind supposedly can nevertheless decipher and respond to), etc..

Let's now examine man's first encounter with sin.

MAN'S FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH SIN

The Bible records man's very first encounter with Satan and with sin. This account is very revealing in that it shows us the human mind in action and how it can be influenced. This account also shows us some of Satan's limitations.

Notice:

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?
(Genesis 3:1 AV)

Satan is extremely subtle or cunning (Green's Literal Translation) or crafty (NRSV). He knows every single way in which the human mind can be influenced. And here in this very first confrontation with mankind, Satan used what is HIS MOST EFFECTIVE WAY of influencing us human beings. What is that way?

SATAN'S MOST EFFECTIVE TOOL IS TO APPEAL TO OUR SENSES OF SEEING AND OF HEARING!

Appealing to our senses of sight and hearing is a far more effective way to lead us into sins than secretly putting thoughts into our minds, or supposedly trying to influence our subconscious minds.

Notice Ephesians 2:2.

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (Ephesians 2:2 AV)

Satan is the spirit that controls "the power of the air" ... YET HE CHOSE TO SPEAK TO EVE! Could he not have just put a wrong thought into her mind, to get her to sin? Satan's most effective way to influence us human beings is to reach our minds through the senses of seeing and hearing. Many of our thoughts are triggered by something we have seen or heard.

Satan started off his contact with Eve by telling her a lie. The purpose behind that lie was NOT that Satan expected Eve to believe that lie ... Satan knew very well that Eve would come back to him with the correct answer. The purpose for the lie Satan told in Genesis 3:1 was not to deceive Eve about what God's actual instructions were. The real purpose of that lie in Genesis 3:1 was TO START THE PROCESS to get Eve's mind TO DESIRE SOMETHING THAT GOD HAD FORBIDDEN!

As Satan no doubt correctly anticipated, Eve then responded with the correct answer, thereby getting her mind focussed on THE RESTRICTION God had imposed on them.

Notice:

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. (Genesis 3:2-3 AV)

This answer from Eve now laid the foundation for the next lie. The next lie would appeal directly to her desire for what God had forbidden.

Notice:

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.
(Genesis 3:4-5 AV)

Here we have the second lie that Satan told Eve. This lie had a twofold purpose. Firstly it was aimed at minimizing and playing down any possible penalties for transgressing God's instructions. Secondly it was aimed at maximizing and grossly exaggerating the rewards such transgression would bring to her.

PLAY DOWN POSSIBLE PENALTIES AND EMPHASIZE THE ENJOYMENT IT WILL GIVE YOU!

Jesus Christ told us very plainly in John 8:44 that Satan is "the father of lies".

Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:44 AV)

So Satan "INVENTED" the process of lying. He originated the concept. In Genesis chapter 3 we see three different purposes that Satan has when he inspires lies. They are:

1) Satan may present us with a lie not necessarily to deceive us about something (where Satan knows that we actually know the truth), but simply as a very effective way to get us to FOCUS OUR MINDS onto a subject that Satan wants us to dwell on. Without Satan's first lie Eve's mind would not have focussed on the restriction God had placed on them. Satan's lie got her thinking about that restriction.

2) Satan will also present us with lies to get us to minimize any penalties our transgressions of God's laws will bring upon us. [e.g. "You'll never get caught. Nobody will know what you have done. It won't hurt anybody else. It's not as bad as what other people are doing." etc.] Here Satan's goal is to deceive us.

3) Satan will also present us with lies to maximize the rewards our transgressions of God's laws will bring us. [e.g. "You'll be rich and you'll never have to worry about money again. You'll be famous and important. This will be the most exciting thing you will ever have experienced. You'll be so happy." etc.] Here Satan's goal is also to deceive us.

Let's notice a further tactic Satan used here.

SATAN USES OTHER PEOPLE TO GET AT US

It should be quite clear that in Genesis chapter 3 it was not really Satan's goal to get through to Eve! Deceiving Eve was only a stepping-stone for Satan's REAL goal. Satan's real goal was to get at ADAM! It was Adam who was the first human being God had created, and it was Adam that Satan was really intent on leading into sin! Satan's mission statement for this specific event was "to lead ADAM into sin". Even if Eve had somehow not sinned, Satan would still have considered his mission to have been "a success" as long as he could have led Adam into sinning. If, however, Adam had NOT sinned, even after Eve had been deceived into eating the forbidden fruit, THEN Satan would have had to face the fact that his mission had been "a failure". Adam was Satan's primary target, not Eve.

So when Satan appeared in the garden, his focus was on Adam, yet he CHOSE to approach only Eve directly. Instead of trying to influence Adam himself directly, Satan chose instead to USE EVE TO GET

AT ADAM! And he succeeded perfectly, unfortunately for us human beings.

So Satan understands that some human beings are more likely to accept his line of reasoning than other human beings, and that some human beings will have more resistance towards his ways of life than other people. THEREFORE Satan uses two different approaches.

1) With people who are "naturally" more receptive to his ideas, Satan may use a more direct approach in presenting his temptations.

2) With people who may have a greater "natural" resistance to his ways, Satan uses the indirect approach of presenting his ideas through other human beings, who happen to enjoy a measure of friendship or respect from the people that Satan REALLY wants to influence. The most powerful example of this approach was seen when Satan tried to influence Jesus Christ through a suggestion that was verbalized by the Apostle Peter (see Matthew 16:21-23), and Jesus Christ responded by seeing right through Satan's tactic and saying to Peter: "GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:23).

When Satan uses this second approach, he expects those he is really trying to get at to have their defences down, because it is, after all, a friend or a family-member who is making this suggestion on Satan's behalf. He knows that sometimes we are less likely to resist a temptation when it is presented to us as a suggestion from a friend or from someone we respect. He knows that many times we are quite susceptible to such pressure in general and to peer pressure specifically.

In Genesis 3 Satan approached Eve directly and managed to deceive her. Satan's temptation of Eve was his indirect way of trying to get Adam to sin, through peer pressure from Eve. And in this case Satan's tactics were successful.

Now let's get back to looking at Eve's mind. Let's continue with the account in Genesis 3.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. (Genesis 3:6 AV)

Here we have a very concise account of both, Adam and Eve, sinning. But let's look at the actual process that took place. Notice:

1) Eve "SAW" the tree in a different light from the way she had viewed it previously. This is telling us that SHE USED HER MIND TO REACH THIS CONCLUSION!

2) It was HER MIND that told her that this fruit was good and pleasant. This is something she "reasoned out" after what Satan had told her about this tree.

3) After Eve had eaten some of the fruit and then gave some of it to Adam, Adam too FIRST HAD TO USE HIS MIND before he was capable of sinning.

[In this article we won't look at the concept of "sinning ignorantly", as expressed by the Old Testament "sin offering". Sinning "ignorantly" might incur some automatic consequence or penalty, but it did not involve the same degree of spiritual accountability, since it did not involve any wrong attitude towards God.]

So here is something we should note.

The very first time human beings were ever confronted by the possibility of sinning:

BEFORE THEY COULD SIN, THEY HAD TO USE THEIR MINDS! THEY HAD TO THINK ABOUT THE TEMPTATION LAID BEFORE THEM!

The point to understand is this: Satan cannot get you to sin without you yourself **FIRST** using your own mind and **CONSENTING** to sin (for whatever reason).

Regarding this event in Genesis 3, the Apostle Paul tells us:

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. (1 Timothy 2:14 AV)

So Eve was actually deceived by Satan; Eve did not see that Satan was lying to her. So Satan led Eve into sin by deceiving her. But Satan had not even attempted to deceive Adam directly. Instead, he attempted to deceive Adam by working through Adam's wife. Yet even then Satan had not managed to actually "deceive" Adam; instead he only managed to lead Adam into sin through peer pressure, the pressure to consent to something his wife had **ALREADY** done. [Another forceful example of where Satan did **NOT** manage to actually "deceive" a man, yet nevertheless succeeded in leading him into sin through peer pressure from "his wives" is in the case when king Solomon was an old man, and his foreign wives persuaded him against his better judgment to build pagan temples for them.]

What we see from Paul's comment in 1 Timothy 2:14 is that Eve's reasoning was not sound; the way she used her mind was not sound. And this is a universal truth:

WHENEVER WE SIN, AND FOR WHATEVER REASONS THAT MAY BE, OUR REASONING IS NEVER "SOUND"! WHEN WE SIN WE ARE NEVER USING OUR MINDS CORRECTLY!

[Again, I am not speaking about "sinning ignorantly", like taking something by mistake that you honestly thought belonged to you, etc.. The very expression "to sin ignorantly" implies that the mind is **NOT** involved in such sins.]

So before we can actually sin, we must in some way use our minds. Now if we have "programmed" our minds to respond to certain situations in ways that are sinful, then we may in actual practice not give very much thought at all to the sins we are committing. They may have become "habitual" or "instinctive" to us. [Example: people who habitually use foul and abusive language may not even be aware of what they are saying.] But the account in Genesis chapter 3 shows us the human mind **BEFORE** it had accepted any kind of programming one way or the other; it was in fact being tested as to whether it would accept either God's "operating system" or whether it would accept Satan's "operating system". We all know which "operating system" Adam and Eve ended up with ... it was Satan's. But if they had **REJECTED** Satan's "operating system", **THEN** God would have installed **HIS** "operating system" into their minds.

So here is a point we should always remember:

SATAN'S OPERATING SYSTEM FOR OUR MINDS is really copyright protected "shareware" or "freeware", and it is readily and spontaneously installed. The installation takes place "in the background" as it were. It is **ALMOST**, but not quite, "pre-loaded" into every new human mind that comes into existence. The only "requirement" for freely sharing this copyrighted "operating system" with others is

that full credit is always given to its author, Satan.

GOD'S OPERATING SYSTEM FOR OUR MINDS is also copyright protected, but it is most emphatically NOT "shareware" or "freeware" and it NEVER comes "pre-loaded"! It has one fixed price for everyone; there is no bulk discount and no special cash discount. The price is fixed and not negotiable. That price is "total and unconditional repentance" for anyone and everyone, without respect for any person's status or background or position. No "free trial copies" of this operating system are ever distributed.

Let's continue with the account in Genesis 3.

THREE COMMON RESPONSES TO HAVING SINNED

Let's now notice how Adam and Eve responded after they had both sinned.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:7-8 AV)

Immediately after sinning they tried to "COVER UP SELF" by sewing fig leaves together. This was the evidence that Satan's "operating system" was now fully installed in their minds, because this is always the first "instinctive" response of "Satan's operating system" to having sinned, trying to cover up what we have done. They also tried to "HIDE FROM GOD", evidence that fear and insecurity are ALWAYS a spontaneous consequence to having sinned.

Then God confronted them.

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? (Genesis 3:9-11 AV)

So here God asked Adam the question: have you sinned? Notice how Adam responded.

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. (Genesis 3:12 AV)

Here we see two more ways in which Adam responded.

First, he responded by blaming others (in this case Eve was the only other person around). And then Adam also tried to justify himself (implied in his response to God).

So three common responses when we have sinned, and which three responses are an integral part of Satan's operating system, are:

- 1) We try to cover up our guilt and hide from God.
- 2) We try to blame other people for our sins.

3) We try to justify ourselves.

Paul summed these last two points up as follows:

Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while ACCUSING OR ELSE EXCUSING ONE ANOTHER;) (Romans 2:15 AV)

As Paul put it: ACCUSING others, and EXCUSING self.

Today we commonly try to erase guilt by three things:

- 1) We blame Satan ... he tempted us and it is all his fault (Eve's approach in Genesis 3).
- 2) We blame society ... the people around us and the pressures they exert on us.
- 3) We appeal to psychology ... we pay people to tell us that we are not really responsible for our sins, whatever they may be.

HOW WE ARE ENTICED INTO SIN

Over the years the Church has repeatedly published articles, in which it was stated that our three big enemies are SATAN and SOCIETY and SELF! In some cases very dramatic pictures were painted to make this point. However, that is not really how the Apostle James explained this matter.

James also discussed the matter of how we are enticed. And this is what he wrote. [I have added the Greek words for the words "tempted" in parenthesis to the text below.]

Blessed *is* the man that endureth TEMPTATION (Greek is peirasmos): for when he is TRIED (Greek is dokimos, meaning approved, accepted), he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is TEMPTED (Greek is peirazo), I am TEMPTED (peirazo) of God: for God cannot be TEMPTED (apeirastos) with evil, neither TEMPTETH (peirazo) he any man: But every man is TEMPTED (peirazo), when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. (James 1:12-16)

Here is how these verses are rendered in Green's Literal Translation:

Blessed *is* the man who endures temptation, because having been approved he will receive the crown of life which the Lord promised to the ones loving Him. Let no one being tempted say, I am tempted from God. For God is not tempted by evils, and He tempts no one. But each one is tempted by his own lusts, having been drawn out and having been seduced *by them*. Then being conceived, lust brings forth sin. And sin being fully formed brings forth death. Do not go astray, my beloved brothers, (James 1:12-16 LIT)

Notice that in this passage James places the focus ONLY ON SELF! Why didn't James say something like "every man is drawn away by Satan" or "every man is drawn away by society"? Why did James focus EXCLUSIVELY on "self"?

The answer is that we really want to blame Satan and society for our sins. That is really no different from what Adam did back in Genesis. But it is not right before God for us to seek to place even a portion of our guilt on others (be it on Satan or be it on society).

BEFORE GOD WE OURSELVES ARE ACCOUNTABLE FOR OUR SINS, NOT SATAN AND NOT SOCIETY!

Notice what the Apostle John explained:

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that *is* in the world, THE LUST OF THE FLESH, AND THE LUST OF THE EYES, AND THE PRIDE OF LIFE, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (1 John 2:15-16 AV)

Here we see three things that Satan and society offer us to tempt us: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. The point is that they can tempt us, but they can never force us to sin.

WHERE DO YOU LIKE TO PITCH YOUR TENT?

Let's understand that the more we are EXPOSED TO Satan and society, the more temptations we are going to have to deal with, and the more our lusts are going to be stimulated. Similarly, the less we are exposed to Satan and society, the less temptations we are going to have to deal with. That's because Satan works primarily through our senses of seeing and hearing.

Let's look at the story of Abraham and Lot.

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, AND LOT dwelled in the cities of the plain, and PITCHED *HIS* TENT TOWARD SODOM. But the men of Sodom *were* wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly. (Genesis 13:11-13 AV)

Lot was not all that different from you and from me. He pitched his tent "towards Sodom". The fact is that MOST PEOPLE like to pitch their tents "near Sodom", because that is where all the action is, that's where they have all "the good things" that our society offers us. When we are concerned about our dress and our make-up and our entertainment and our customs and traditions, then we very often "almost instinctively" pitch near to Sodom. The man Lot was really typical of a great many of us today!

Now here is a very vital lesson!

And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, WHO DWELT IN SODOM, and his goods, and departed. (Genesis 14:12 AV)

The lesson is this:

If you pitch YOUR tent "TOWARDS Sodom", then it will not be long before you wind up "IN Sodom"! That's what happened to Lot!

It is a logical progression. When we pitch "TOWARDS Sodom", then we don't see the snares Satan uses to draw us, ever so slowly in some cases, INTO Sodom. We ourselves tend to think that we are somehow still "on the outskirts" of Sodom, and we don't realize that what "used to be" the outskirts of Sodom has in fact become a full-blown part of the ever-expanding city of Sodom all around us.

Now understand the following:

When we end up IN Sodom, THEN we obviously will have to face far more temptations than when we are only pitching NEAR Sodom. And when we pitch NEAR Sodom, then we obviously have to face far more temptations than when we are pitching FAR AWAY FROM SODOM, like Abraham did.

WHAT WE OURSELVES DO WITH OUR LIVES HAS A VERY GREAT DEAL TO DO WITH THE TYPE OF TEMPTATIONS WE WILL HAVE TO FACE!

Stated in simple terms:

If we end up having to face all kinds of difficult tests and trials because we happen to have pitched our tents IN Sodom, THEN that really has nothing to do with "God testing us"! We CHOSE to pitch there! IF we had chosen to pitch somewhere else, THEN some of the problems we have to face PROBABLY would never have come our way!

So the point is this:

If we choose to pitch IN Sodom, then it is simply NOT RIGHT for us to try to blame God for our trials (e.g. "God is really testing me with this trial") or to blame Satan (e.g. "Satan is really trying to get at me with all these trials I am having") or to blame society (e.g. "this perverse society is really making it very difficult for me to obey God"). We ourselves PITCHED OUR TENTS THERE! So OBVIOUSLY we are going to be constantly bombarded by all kinds of temptations on every side ... what else can we possibly expect when we pitch our tents IN Sodom?

Understand that many of the temptations Lot had to battle with (see 2 Peter 2:6-7) NEVER CAME ABRAHAM'S WAY ... because Abraham had deliberately chosen to pitch far away from Sodom! It was Lot's own decision that resulted in him having to deal with "the filthy conduct" of the people in Sodom (same verses).

So let's go back to what James said in his letter.

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. (James 1:14 AV)

So obviously, the more temptations we are exposed to, the more our lusting is likely to be aroused, and the more likely we are to be "drawn away" from God's true ways. Where we choose to pitch our tents has A COLOSSAL INFLUENCE on how many trials we will be exposed to.

LET'S LOOK AT SOME EXAMPLES

James continued to explain:

Submit yourselves therefore to God. RESIST THE DEVIL, AND HE WILL FLEE FROM YOU.
(James 4:7 AV)

Let me give you one example:

In almost 29 years of marriage we have NEVER yet owned a television set! I once hired a set for two weeks so I could view 14 video-tapes from the Church about the nature of God (back in 1993). Apart from that we've never had a TV in our various homes.

Is it wrong to own a TV set? Of course not! Is it more righteous to not have a TV set in your home? Certainly not! Have we watched many TV programs at other people's homes over the years? Yes, certainly we have done that. Might we at some point in the future decide to get a TV for our home? Yes, we may very possibly do that. But let's ask another question:

Does having a TV set in our homes amount to pitching our tent "near" Sodom? YES, IT DOES!

Can we shut out the wrong influences even if we happen to live IN Sodom? Yes, we can. But is this going to be easy to do, or is it going to be a difficult process? IT IS GOING TO BE DIFFICULT! It is not for nothing that Satan is "the prince of the power of the air", and with the reception set in our homes he is only as far away as the pressing of a button on the remote control!

Am I saying that our children are more righteous because we did not have television in our home? Not at all! Far from it. But were they exposed to FAR LESS TEMPTATIONS than their peers, who may have watched anything from 300 to 1000 hours and more of TV every year? Were they exposed to far less wrong examples and wrong influences than their TV-watching peers? Yes, they were exposed to far less temptations and far less wrong examples. Does that automatically make them better persons than those who regularly watched TV? No, not at all. But there are and there were some wrong thoughts that reach human eyes and ears, and thus human minds, by means of the television set that the minds of our children were simply never exposed to ... simply because we didn't have any TV in our home.

When my wife and I were married, I deliberately chose to pitch my tent "away from TV". Whatever exposure I have had to TV since then (and the same goes for my whole family), it is obviously FAR LESS than I would have had, had I always had a TV set in all of our homes over the years. I am not at all trying to imply that all TV is bad, not at all. But it is also a fact that wrong thoughts VERY EASILY enter our minds because of what we see and hear on TV ... and we then have to deal with those wrong thoughts. It is obviously better if those wrong thoughts don't even reach our minds in the first place, than if, after they have reached our minds, we have to battle to put them out. It is easy to say that we are "very selective" about what we watch on TV, but even then some thoughts, which we did not anticipate, are likely to at times reach our minds.

It is the same principle as saying: it is a tremendous thing when we come to true repentance after having sinned in some specific way. But it is obviously EVEN BETTER if we hadn't sinned in that specific way in the first place ... thus eliminating THE NEED for repentance regarding that specific matter. To sin and then to repent is good; but to avoid sinning is even better.

When we have a TV set in our homes we have not really done anything wrong. But we ARE pitching pretty close to Sodom. Lot likewise had not really done anything wrong when he pitched near Sodom. But it soon got to be pretty difficult to not get involved in the affairs of Sodom in at least SOME ways. His offer to allow the mob outside of his door to rape his daughters (see Genesis 19:8) is a reflection of the effect living in Sodom had on Lot.

So the point is this:

When we of our own choice pitch our tents near Sodom, then our minds will AUTOMATICALLY have a greater exposure to Satan and his temptations, than when we consciously decide to pitch our tents far

away from Sodom.

Here are some other ways in which we can in effect "pitch our tents towards Sodom":

- 1) The entertainment we choose. A great deal of our entertainment today is clearly immoral. If we choose to let such immoral entertainment have access to our minds, THEN we are pitching "towards Sodom".
- 2) The music we listen to. Again, many songs have lyrics that are clearly immoral, while others are expressions of rebellion. If we choose to listen to such music, then we are again pitching "towards Sodom". And even if we don't actually do anything that is wrong, involvement in such immoral entertainment and/or music can easily cause us to compromise or lower our standards, and we ourselves don't even realize that our standards have changed.
- 3) The friends and the company we keep. Many proverbs admonish us not to keep company with certain types of people, because if we do, then we are again pitching "towards Sodom", and giving Satan some additional access to our minds.
- 4) The books and magazines we read. Much immoral material and material contrary to godly attitudes is published. If we read such immoral or anti-God literature, we can easily be pitching "towards Sodom". We can easily be giving Satan access to our minds, and thus exposing ourselves to temptations we need not have had to face.
- 5) Our grooming and make-up. It is VERY EASY to want to be accepted by those in the world (i.e. by those who are "a part of Sodom", see Scriptures like Revelation 11:8, etc.). We very easily talk ourselves into justifying the ways of this world in the matter of grooming and make-up, and we readily ignore the underlying ungodly motivations in the world's standards in this regard. Many of the world's ways in this area are motivated by vanity and are designed to create lust and coveting. It is easy to pitch "towards Sodom" in this area.
- 6) The world pressures us to covet. Society urges us to buy things we cannot really afford, by urging us to "buy now and pay later", thereby getting into serious debt. Covetousness is one of the foundations of Sodom. In this regard we can do what everyone else around is also doing, live beyond our means. But if we do, we are pitching "towards Sodom".

We don't have to look at and listen to and read questionable things. But if we do, THEN we are giving Satan access to our minds, just like Eve gave Satan access to her mind, and like Lot gave Satan access to his mind by having pitched "towards Sodom". And in that case it should not come as a surprise that we'll have to face far more temptations than other people who didn't let those things into their minds in the first place.

Remember, we are examining how our minds work, and how Satan attempts to influence us. And one of Satan's most powerful tools for leading us into temptations and into sins is:

TO PERSUADE US TO VOLUNTARILY PITCH OUR TENTS TOWARDS SODOM!

To make this quite clear:

It is NOT that we have sinned when we pitch "towards Sodom"! The real problem with pitching "towards Sodom" is that WE OURSELVES BECOME RESPONSIBLE FOR HAVING TO FACE A GREATER NUMBER OF TEMPTATIONS!

So we can find ourselves in one of two different situations:

1) Because we have pitched our tents "towards Sodom", we may find ourselves having to deal with a great many more temptations regarding both, wrong thoughts and wrong actions. This does NOT mean that we may not end up handling those temptations correctly, resisting Satan and resisting those temptations. It doesn't mean that we will necessarily sin. But we WILL have to deal with them on the conscious level. As Peter tells us about the man Lot: " And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation (conduct) of the wicked" (2 Peter 2:7 AV). Or, as it is rendered in Young's Literal Translation: " and righteous Lot, worn down by the conduct in lasciviousness of the impious, He did rescue" (2 Peter 2:7 YLT). Lot is called "righteous", but having chosen to pitch towards Sodom was the direct cause for him being "vexed" or "worn down" by the perverseness all around him.

2) Because we consciously pitched our tents "away from Sodom" (like Abraham did), we may have to deal with far less temptations than those who pitch "towards Sodom". This does not mean that we will automatically handle those temptations that DO come our way correctly. We may still end up giving in to temptations that do come our way, even though we carefully pitched further away from Sodom. But it does mean that we are spared having to face all the ADDITIONAL temptations that surely would have come our way had we also pitched closer to Sodom. As far as Abraham was concerned, he was never "vexed" or "worn down" by the perverse conduct of the people in Sodom, because he had deliberately chosen to pitch away from Sodom; Abraham never had to deal with many of the temptations that regularly confronted Lot while he was in Sodom.

Where we choose to pitch OUR tents has a major, major impact on what experiences we will be exposed to in our lives. Paul stated this point of pitching away from Sodom in a slightly different way. He wrote:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things. (Philippians 4:8 AV)

If we strive to not let anything that does not meet the right standards into our minds, then we are consciously seeking to pitch "away from Sodom".

So to summarize this point:

For us to be accountable to God for things that are sinful, they must come to our CONSCIOUS ATTENTION, and we must actually DO THEM (i.e. THINK on them or ACT on them). There is no sin, as far as spiritual accountability is concerned, without conscious attention. You cannot sin in your sleep. Whatever dreams you may have, when you are dreaming you are not sinning. [I am not talking about the thoughts we may sometimes have while we are awake, which may perhaps precipitate some dreams?]

OUR REAL PROBLEM IS THAT WE HATE TO ADMIT GUILT!

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong used to frequently say that the most difficult thing for us human beings to do is to admit that we are wrong. We will do whatever we can to get around admitting that we are wrong. And even when we do get ourselves to admit that we are wrong, so often we will try to add a proviso or some excuse to make our guilt smaller.

It is so easy to see when OTHER PEOPLE do this. However, to really understand the human mind, it is fundamental that we understand this about ourselves, THAT WE OURSELVES ARE ALSO LIKE THIS! WE ARE NO DIFFERENT FROM OTHER PEOPLE IN THIS REGARD!

That is not just what we were like before we came into God's Church. Our minds are STILL this way. That's what the Apostle Paul could see about his own mind, when he wrote:

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Romans 7:23-24 AV)

Now here is the crux of the matter. These are the basic points we need to understand in order to correctly understand how our minds function.

1) ALL OF US ARE GUILTY BEFORE GOD!

2) Guilt makes us uncomfortable. It makes us insecure and creates feelings of inferiority in us. Therefore we expend a great deal of effort to try to get rid of guilt. Keep in mind that we HATE to admit guilt.

3) GOD HAS OFFERED US A WAY TO ELIMINATE THAT GUILT! This is actually the only real way in which guilt can POSSIBLY be eliminated from our lives. That way is TO CONFESS our guilt to God AND TO REPENT (to change our way of thinking). Upon such honest confession and genuine repentance GOD will remove our guilt from us (Isaiah 1:18-19; Psalm 103:12; etc.).

4) It is absolutely vital to understand that the only possible way for guilt to be removed from our lives is FOR GOD HIMSELF TO REMOVE SUCH GUILT FROM US! There is no other way!

5) However, given the human mind's animosity to God and His laws (Romans 8:7) and our extreme reluctance to confess guilt in an unqualified way, we try every other possible way to get rid of guilt. We will try any other possible way rather than to freely confess our guilt to God. We will do almost anything just to get around having to confess to God.

6) We will even PAY people in our attempts to have them persuade us that we aren't really guilty. Some of our most common ways of trying to get rid of guilt include:

A) RELIGION: We want to put OUR guilt on Satan. It is one thing for GOD to place some (or all?) of our guilt upon Satan (after Jesus Christ first took our guilt upon Himself) as pictured by the Azazel goat on the Day of Atonement; it is an altogether different thing for US OURSELVES to want to place our guilt upon Satan ... that borders on us being presumptuous. Yet in the religions of this world variations of the "Satan made me do it" theme are fairly common.

B) SOCIETY: We blame others for our guilt; it is really their fault that we sinned. The world has treated us unfairly and we deserve better than what life has presented us with. It is only because society is so evil that we have now also incurred this guilt. And if it wasn't for them, then we never would have done the wrong we have done.

C) PSYCHOLOGY and PSYCHIATRY: We hire a professional (or read their books) to tell us that we aren't really responsible for our actions. It's in our background or our early childhood, and it isn't really our fault. We simply couldn't help it.

D) PSYCHO-MEDICINE: It is the wrong chemistry in our bodies that made us do the wrong. It is not our fault if we turn out to be alcoholics or homosexuals. It is in our genes. The hormonal imbalance in our bodies caused us to behave in undesirable ways ... it isn't OUR fault.

E) PSYCHO-HUMANISTS: All our problems are due to the strict, harsh moral values we were expected

to adhere to in our childhood and youth. The suppression of our real feelings and desires by these harsh moral standards twisted our minds ... so we can't be blamed for the wrong we have done.

F) BEHAVIOURISTS: All our problems are due to us having to live in a bad environment. The whole system is to blame for the looting and rioting we took part in ... it's not OUR fault ... what do you expect from the bad environment we are forced to live in?

G) BIO-RHYTHMS: We have no control over the rhythms which our bodies are subject to, and we couldn't help doing something wrong when all our rhythms hit a peak or a low-point at the same time. We couldn't help it.

H) ASTROLOGY: It was predestined in the stars that we would do this or that. So it can't be our fault, can it?

etc., etc.

And what is the result of all of these different approaches?

We have been told, and we want to be persuaded that **WE ARE FREE FROM ALL GUILT AND RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR WRONG CONDUCT OR ACTIONS!**

And so **OUTWARDLY** we will boldly assert to one and all these justifications for our wrong conduct (or the wrong conduct of our children!). We respond with indignation to anyone who dares to challenge the validity of our justifications. We will quote the "authorities" for whatever course of justification we have accepted to support our freedom from any guilt ... though we seldom quote the Bible in this process!

But **INWARDLY** we are still very insecure, because deep-down we **KNOW** that before God we are guilty, and no amount of psychology or bio-rhythms or astrology or the teachings of psycho-humanism can remove the guilt out of our lives. **ONLY GOD CAN DO THAT!**

As God inspired Isaiah to record:

Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever: That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD: Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, **PROPHECY NOT UNTO US RIGHT THINGS, SPEAK UNTO US SMOOTH THINGS, PROPHECY DECEITS:** Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, **CAUSE THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL TO CEASE FROM BEFORE US.** (Isaiah 30:8-11 AV)

People just don't want to deal with guilt God's way. And every other way is guaranteed to fail! So therefore the guilt always remains, even when it is hidden by a facade of outward confidence. Deep-down the guilt is still there.

7) We don't recognize that **SATAN HAS PROVIDED ALL OF THESE "ALTERNATE WAYS" TO REMOVE GUILT FROM US!** And Satan continues to provide "new justifications", based on "new research" for removing our guilt all the time. It is quite likely that before the end of this year, or within the next few years, we will hear of some "NEW RESEARCH" that pronounces some or other deviant form of behaviour to be "beyond the control of the person involved"; therefore we cannot hold them accountable for their conduct.

Notice what the Apostle Paul explained to Timothy:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And THEY SHALL TURN AWAY *THEIR* EARS FROM THE TRUTH, AND SHALL BE TURNED UNTO FABLES. (2 Timothy 4:3-4 AV)

Now Paul wasn't talking about the fables of "the big bad wolf". He was talking about FABLES regarding HOW WE HANDLE GUILT! That's what the previous verse is talking about!

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; REPROVE, REBUKE, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:2 AV)

Reproving and rebuking have to do with showing people their GUILT before God! But it is painful for us to be confronted with our guilt, and so we would much rather believe "fables" about why we have done (or are still doing) things that are wrong. And so we would much rather look for the causes of our wrong behaviour "IN OUR BACKGROUND" than to accept full responsibility for our behaviour.

In the past three decades I have visited many hundreds of people, including Church members, prospective members and readers of the Church's literature. One of the most common approaches people take when discussing a predicament they may be in is to say:

"NOW YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND MY BACKGROUND ..."

And what then follows is A JUSTIFICATION for why they did what they did. Their course of action may have been wrong before God, but it is ever so logical once you understand "their background". "Their background" is presented to diminish guilt and responsibility. We have all done this at some time or other. Our background provides us with excuses and justifications for when we fall short or when we do something wrong.

It all goes back to "the operating system for the human mind" that Adam and Eve accepted back in the garden in Eden, the operating system that "instinctively" thinks of excuses and justifications, rather than thinking "instinctively" of admitting guilt.

WE NEED TO LET GO OF "OUR BACKGROUND"

Before God our background is never a justification for wrong conduct. The backgrounds of the men who received 5 talents or 2 talents or only one talent (see the parable in Matthew 25:14-30) were no doubt different, but these differences in backgrounds never entered the picture. When God calls us, we are supposed to "FORGET the things that are past" (see Philippians 3:13), rather than to hold onto the past as an excuse for the present. We are supposed to "BURY" the past when we are baptized! As long as we cling to "our background", we are not really walking "in newness of life" (see Romans 6:4).

The past is past and with God the past can NEVER provide any excuses for wrong conduct in the present! God is willing to "wink at" the past (see Acts 17:30) provided we NOW, IN THE PRESENT, do what is right in His sight.

To understand the human mind, we need to understand that all of its efforts to eliminate guilt are focused on THE PAST (be it heredity or be it environment) being the justification for the present. But with God this is NEVER acceptable. God offers us a way to truly BURY the past and a way for GOD to remove our guilt ... IF WE ARE WILLING TO CHANGE! But "background-researchers" are never willing to change ... they desperately need their background to justify the present.

So how does Satan seek to influence us?

Satan wants us to deny all guilt. To help us in this process, Satan rolls out an endless stream of excuses and justifications for our guilt. We simply have to pick the ones that appeal most to us personally. Anything, as long as we reject God's way of removing our guilt. Although we have become much more sophisticated in how we do this, we still follow the same basic ways that Adam and Eve tried for coping with guilt back in Genesis 3. And when we DO resort to any of these more sophisticated ways of trying to remove guilt, we are showing that our minds are still quite capable of running "Satan's software".

SATAN HAS LIMITATIONS

There are some things Satan CAN do and there are other things that Satan CANNOT do. Consider the following points.

1) The most obvious ways, and also the most common and most effective ways, in which Satan tries to tempt us are through our senses of SEEING AND HEARING!

2) Apart from influencing us through the senses of sight and hearing, Satan CANNOT arbitrarily put THOUGHTS into our minds! That is beyond the powers God has given him. There is only one way in which Satan can spontaneously put wrong thoughts into our minds ... and that is WITH OUR ACTIVE AND WILLING COOPERATION! We actually have to agree to allow him to put wrong thoughts into our minds (I mean apart from, and in the total absence of, reaching our minds through the senses of sight and hearing).

THIS IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND!

Never overlook OUR PART in the wrong thoughts that actually manage to reach our minds, irrespective of whether we manage to resist those wrong thoughts and then to put them out of our minds, or whether we give in to those wrong thoughts and entertain them, and perhaps even act on them.

3) THE WAY WE SHOW SATAN that we are willing to allow him to put some wrong thoughts into our minds is BY PITCHING OUR TENTS "TOWARDS SODOM"!

Satan was able to put a whole lot more wrong thoughts into Lot's mind than he was able to put into Abraham's mind by the simple little step of Lot pitching "towards Sodom". That "pitching of his tent" is what gave Satan a greater entry into Lot's mind ... and Lot's mind ended up being "vexed" because of this access to his mind that he had given to Satan by the simple matter of "pitching his tent" in the wrong place.

4) The way to limit Satan's access to OUR minds is to consciously seek to pitch our tents AWAY FROM SODOM! That's what James explained in his letter.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. RESIST THE DEVIL, AND HE WILL FLEE FROM YOU.
(James 4:7 AV)

We severely limit our ability "to resist the devil" when we ourselves choose to pitch our tents towards Sodom! One of the most effective steps we can take in resisting the devil is to DELIBERATELY and consciously pitch our tents away from Sodom. And when Satan then "flees from us", it means that he is not able to secretly put thoughts into our minds that are somehow totally unconnected to things we have seen or heard.

5) Satan cannot get "hidden" messages into your mind.

A) The idea that our minds are supposedly susceptible to some subversive message that is hidden in some vocal recording, but which can only be clearly understood when that song is (supposedly) played backwards, is UTTERLY ABSURD!

Our minds have a hard enough time trying to CORRECTLY understand things that are said "forwards", i.e. where every word is correctly spoken or sung. How much of what was said in a sermon or in a lecture do we actually recall correctly? It is utterly impossible for our minds to correctly understand some message which is spoken or sung BACKWARDS ... starting with the last syllable of the last word and concluding with the first syllable of the first word. It is 100 times easier for our minds to learn an entire foreign language than to correctly unscramble vocal messages that are presented backwards, especially when the mind does not have the slightest inkling whether or not it should be on "the lookout" for such backward messages. The whole idea is absurd!

B) The idea that our minds can be seduced by hidden messages being flashed onto the screen during a movie is equally absurd! The idea is that some message is flashed onto the screen for too brief a time for us to consciously read, but (supposedly) long enough for our sub-conscious minds to register correctly.

We don't have any "sub-conscious mind" that has eyes and ears! If we did not see something with our conscious mind (and through our eyes), then we simply didn't see it! If we didn't hear something with our conscious mind (and through our ears), then we simply didn't hear it! Don't let psychology deceive you with its claims about our supposed "sub-conscious minds".

And don't for one moment believe that Satan can somehow reach our minds "sub-consciously", because that is simply not true!

6) Since OUR PAST obviously contains many wrong thoughts and wrong actions, these OBVIOUSLY provide Satan with some access to our minds. And understand this: as long as we continue to HOLD FAST TO THE PAST, so long Satan will continue to have that access to our minds!

This also is extremely important to understand, if we want to understand how Satan tries to influence us!

The only way in which we can CUT OFF SATAN'S ACCESS TO OUR MINDS from the ways in which Satan was able to reach our minds IN THE PAST, is for us ... TO LET GO OF THE PAST!!

"The past" holds the key to Satan's past access to our minds. We must let go of the past and bury it, if we wish to cut off the access to our minds that Satan used to have!

7) To state this very plainly:

Many people zealously cling to the past, because in it they seek to justify their present sins and short-comings. Yet anyone who refuses to let go of the past is automatically going to be exposed to

more temptations and more wrong thoughts and impulses from Satan, because Satan's access to their minds is rooted in that "past". People who don't let go of the past, have also not had their past forgiven by God ... God's forgiveness is conditional on "letting go". So it is also wrong for people who refuse to let go of the past to seek the causes for their trials in "tests from God" or in "temptations from Satan or from society" ... their own refusal to bury the past is the direct cause for unnecessary trials.

8) The truth is: There is NOTHING in our past background that CAUSES us to be the way that we are, without us ourselves having CONSENTED to allow our backgrounds to influence us in that way! We have been exposed to many, many influences (both, good and bad) ... but THE DECISIONS as to how to respond to those influences have always been OUR OWN! It was OUR decision when we responded in a positive way to some influence (which influence in itself may have been good or bad), and it was also OUR decision when we responded in a negative way to other influences (which likewise may have been good or bad). Those decisions were not made by our "sub-conscious minds" or by our hormones or by our environment or by Satan or by our genes ... those decisions were always OURS!

Nowhere in the Bible does God give even the slightest indication that, for those who are called in this age, THE PAST can ever be used to justify wrong actions in THE PRESENT! Wrong actions in the present are simply not right, and they are not acceptable before God ... and our past does not enter the picture one way or the other. The only time "the past" DOES enter the picture before God is when we bear GOOD FRUIT in spite of A BAD PAST ... in that case such a "bad past" will lead to a greater reward before God.

God wants us to BURY the past, not to psycho-analyse it in the hope of finding some excuses for the present. The sole purpose for the whole discipline of psychiatry is to free people from their guilt. It is because people have REFUSED God's way of eliminating all past guilt (i.e. confession to God and real repentance) that they are so loaded with guilt feelings that they need another human being "to counsel them" in an effort to get rid of some of this build-up of feelings of guilt.

9) Those "DECISIONS" we made in response to the many influences we have been exposed to determine our CHARACTER! Character development requires active decision-making on the conscious level. We don't develop character in our sleep ... or by listening to subliminal tapes that tell us how to overcome a multitude of problems. Character is never developed without effort on our part, making right decisions and sticking with those right decisions.

10) That is why God forces us to make decisions. He clearly forced Israel to decide:

I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, *that* I HAVE SET BEFORE YOU LIFE AND DEATH, blessing and cursing: THEREFORE CHOOSE LIFE, that both thou and thy seed may live: (Deuteronomy 30:19 AV)

God commands us to decide between life and death! God clearly tells us which decision is the right one. But we ourselves MUST DECIDE!

So here is the point:

IF WE CHOOSE DEATH, THEN WE CANNOT BLAME ... our biorhythms or our bad genes or subliminal seduction or back-masking or wrong chemistry or the bad environment or our background or our subconscious mind or our low self-image or Satan or society or the strict morals we had to abide by as children ... BECAUSE WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR DECISIONS! Keep in mind that God was speaking these words in Deuteronomy 30:19 to a people whose very recent background had been SLAVERY IN THE GHETTOES IN EGYPT!

When God punished their transgressions with plagues and suffering, their "background" was never a mitigating factor. Irrespective of their past, they were responsible for their present decisions.

THE SAME APPLIES TO US TODAY!

11) So to summarize the most common ways Satan tries to influence us:

A) Satan appeals to us overwhelmingly through the two senses of seeing and hearing.

B) With his temptations he tries to get us to pitch our tents "towards Sodom", or preferably even "in Sodom", because in this way he gains a greater access to our minds, compared to the access he has when we pitch our tents "away from Sodom".

C) Where God provides the only real way for eliminating past guilt from our lives (i.e. confess to God and then change the way we think), Satan provides a supermarket-range of options for eliminating past guilt, all of which have "eye-appeal" (they look good to the human mind) but which don't really work ... they are all only counterfeits.

D) Most of Satan's counterfeit ways of eliminating guilt involve either clinging to the past, or at least focussing on the past. This is the antithesis of God's way for eliminating guilt, which is to BURY AND FORGET THE PAST.

E) Satan cannot reach our minds by trying to influence us on some supposed "sub-conscious" level. The fact that sometimes we may not even notice some things that take place on the conscious level is due to our lack of attention to what is going on; it is not evidence of something taking place on some supposed "sub-conscious" level.

12) The ways we can "resist" Satan include:

A) Realize that the things we see and hear have the greatest influences on us. Therefore we need to be on our guard as to what we consent to "look at" and "listen to".

B) Where possible, we should always strive to pitch our tents "away from Sodom". This will greatly

decrease the number of trials and temptations with which Satan is able to reach our minds ... irrespective of whether we successfully resist those temptations or whether we end up giving in to some of those temptations.

C) A key component of genuine repentance (i.e. changing the way we think) is to bury the past. This is something Satan does not want us to do, because he knows that this is absolutely vital to having our past guilt removed from our lives by God. To resist Satan effectively, we simply **MUST** let go of the past.

So we don't have to fear that Satan can perhaps get at us without us even being aware of such attempts to lead us away from God.

As the Apostle John wrote:

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because **GREATER IS HE THAT IS IN YOU, THAN HE THAT IS IN THE WORLD.** (1 John 4:4 AV)

Frank W. Nelte