

Psychopannychy, growing in adherence

Why does it seem that a concept like psychopannychy is growing in adherence in today's Christian and Messianic world?

In today's evangelical Christianity, belief in psychopannychy is growing because of a steady influence of liberal theological streams, and with some Bible teachers wanting a naturalistic explanation for almost everything they read in Scripture. There are Left-leaning evangelical teachers who want to keep open a dialogue with their Leftist liberal counterparts—and are highly influenced by them—sometimes with an affirmation of the literal resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ), or salvation only/principally coming from Him, as what makes them really different.

One such psychopannychist, Joel B. Green, states very clearly what the two sources of inspiration for his belief are. He cites the Twentieth Century German theologian Ruldolf Bultmann, who once said, “Man does not *have a soma*; he *is soma*.”¹ This means that a person is just a body, and nothing more. He also references “Darwin and evolutionary biology, which has located *Homo sapiens* within the animal kingdom with a genetic make-up that strongly resembles the creatures around us.”² Having referenced a liberal theologian whose main claim to fame was “de-mythologizing” the New Testament, and the father of evolutionary science via his *Origin of the Species*, it should be no surprise to see conclusions more rooted in looking at people as advanced animals largely subject to divergences of diverse biochemical reactions, rather than those who possess a unique, immaterial and multi-dimensional supernatural component.³

The growth of psychopannychy or “soul sleep” in the Messianic world has less to do with liberal theological influences or Charles Darwin. A majority of those who believe that there is no conscious, disembodied intermediate state are those who simply hate any kind of “Christian doctrine.” There are a variety of Messianic teachers who have been allowed into different Messianic pseudo-denominations and alliances (that just want to swell their numbers and will take almost anybody), and have been given a free hand at promoting virtually whatever they want with no threat of being disciplined. Because a large number of people in these groups often receive their spiritual “nourishment” via controversy, a strong-willed teacher insisting that there is no going to Heaven at death will get a hearing and a following, among other false ideas promoted.

From both angles it is to be observed that there is a general weakening and erosion of orthodox Biblical doctrines in both the Synagogue and Church. Psychopannychy is only one of a selection of false teachings that has had a steady influence in the past half-century. If anyone claims that this is some concept that the Father is somehow “restoring” to His people, then they have not taken a good, sober look at where its ideological support is to be found.

Many of those who promote psychopannychy think that they are restoring a forgotten emphasis on the resurrection of the body. They are right to point out how for many Believers, salvation is exclusively about “going to Heaven,” and the resurrection is some distant afterthought. This does need to be corrected, and not all of the intentions of today's psychopannychists are dishonorable. They go too far, though, in responding to those who think that endless disembodiment in the clouds is the final condition of the redeemed. Psychopannychists reduce the human person to being an entirely material creature: flesh, blood, bones, tissue, and chemicals. Such an

¹ Joel B. Green, *Body, Soul, and Human Life: The Nature of Humanity in the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 4.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

³ Cf. John W. Cooper, *Body, Soul & Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), “The Scientific Challenge to Dualism,” pp 22-24.

exclusively materialistic or naturalistic perspective on the composition of man **causes many people to then seriously doubt that we possess a unique supernatural component** imprinted upon us by our Creator.

In the end, the problem with psychopannychy—whether taught by liberal leaning theologians, or those who hate any form of Christian doctrine—is that it frequently causes people to steadily question and doubt supernatural things altogether. *Are miracles real? Is God real? Or is there a materialistic explanation for all this?* People start to wonder whether or not the Bible is just the collective writings or rantings of some mentally disturbed individuals, who may have just hallucinated some crazy things because they drank too much wine or failed to eat properly. It is undeniable that psychopannychy lays the first stepping stones for people to ultimately apostasize and deny God, because human beings are, after all, thought to just be advanced animals—with no afterlife or future existence to be anticipated.