

DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN MIND

I. Introduction

A. It is our duty as Christians to develop a Christian world and life-view which will serve to guide all our thought and action. This is a life-long process. This is taught in several passages of Scripture:

1. Rom. 12:2. *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. ...*
2. I Cor. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* (This includes the exchange of the old non-Christian worldview for the Christian mindset)
3. II Cor. 10:5. *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

B. Current problem: Very few Christians in the church today have undergone a thorough conversion in thinking. They still think as the pagan world around them. This was shown in a past study by George Barna. Two-thirds of the population do not believe there is such a thing as absolute truth. What was even more startling: 53% of those claiming to be Bible-believing Christians agreed that absolute truth did not exist! More recently (Dec. '03) Barna again shocked us with a study that only 4% of Christians actually have a Christian worldview as a basis for decision-making! (www.barna.org/cgi-bin/PagePressRelease.asp?PressReleaseID=154&Reference=A)

C. Some reasons why professing Christians do not have the Mind of Christ: Lack of discipleship, lack of knowledge, worldliness, spurious conversion, the influence of existentialism and postmodernism which views the mind or worldview-thinking as outdated and politically incorrect. Instead we have *amusement* as opposed to *musement*.

D. The results of this lack of mental conversion in our time have been recounted eloquently in books by Francis Schaeffer, Charles Colson, James Sire, Harry Blamires, and Carl Henry. Some of the results are:

1. A lack of unity. The Church therefore, cannot set the agenda for the culture because it is not united against the world. According to polls, over 60 million people in the U.S. claim to be born-again Christians. Imagine the impact they could have if they presented a united front on moral issues!

2. Compartmentalization of truth. Some things are sacred and others are secular, or holy as opposed to profane. This is a false dichotomy that is foreign to Scripture. This attitude might lead a professing Christian judicial candidate to say *I'm personally opposed to abortion but I will not allow my spiritual beliefs to influence my decisions*. Caesar would have had absolutely no concern about a movement that thought this way!
3. Eschatological determinism. Some say, *The Bible predicts that things will get worse and worse before Christ returns*, therefore, the tendency is to withdraw and concede crucial areas to satan's kingdom.

II. Developing a Christian Mind

- A. The Goal: To think God's thoughts after him. To have a Christian mind is to have the mind of Christ; to have His view of things, His worldview. We must see all things *theologically*, having a Biblically informed view of life.

Further explanation: God is the inventor and creator of all things. Therefore, the ultimate meaning of life is what He says it is. That's why Jesus could say *I am truth*. Without a Creator-God who has revealed Himself in time and space there can be no truth or ultimate meaning in life.

- B. The Beginning: to know the mind of God we must know God! How can we know God?

Man cannot know God unless God first takes the initiative in making Himself known. The Good Shepherd seeks after His sheep (Lk. 15; Jn. 10). No man seeks after God and no one comes to God except that he is drawn by the Spirit of God (Rom. 3). That is why we say Christianity is a religion of grace. The revelation He gives, and salvation He bestows, is by grace. In other words, Christianity is not a worldview thought out by men; rather it has been revealed. Those who believe it, and live by it, do so by the grace of God. The non-Christian is enjoined in Scripture to turn(repent) from his non-Christian view of things and trust in the Lord Jesus.

There is a Biblical analogy which we believe illustrates how men come to Christ. It is found in the story in which Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11). When Jesus called: *Lazarus, come forth*, Lazarus was dead and could neither hear nor respond to the command. But he did respond, because at the moment Jesus gave the command, He simultaneously raised him from the dead, enabling him *to* respond. When God calls a sinner He simultaneously gives him spiritual life enabling him to respond in faith. Note: While this analogy alone is not sufficient to build the doctrine of grace see also Eph. 2.

(Note: There has been much controversy centered around the meaning and content of the Gospel message. For example, see the treatment by John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus*. This is a healthy and absolutely necessary debate! We must be assiduous in clearly discerning what the word of God says. Part of the debate centers around the meaning of the Greek word *pistuo* which is commonly translated by the English word *believe*. The Greek and the English are not exact equivalents. *Pistuo* does not mean mere mental assent as the English sometimes does. While it does include mental assenting to facts, it does not stop there; it also includes the idea of acting on the facts, i.e. commitment to them. You *believe* the chair will hold you up, but Biblical faith means you also rest your weight on it!

C. The Beginning Assumption of the Christian Worldview

1. Definition: An assumption (or presupposition) is something you cannot ultimately prove. It is your starting point and that which all thought is based. ***All worldviews have a beginning assumption.*** They are held in faith, or by conviction. Note: Atheistic worldviews also begin by faith.
2. The Christian's beginning assumption stated:

*Human beings and the universe in which they reside are the creation of the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture (the 66 books of the Bible). This is of course not inspired, but it says it clearly in the fewest words. It is found in **Worldviews in Conflict**, by Ronald H. Nash.*

Note: Some might say (and they do!): How do I know God exists, or that the Bible is true? Do we not have to prove these two assertions first? Our answer to this is no. The criteria by which you would determine the truthfulness of the above would then become your basic assumption or ultimate authority. (What can be more ultimate than the God of the Bible?) You see, if God does not exist, then neither does truth. To the Christian, the triune God of the Scripture is the ultimate authority; beyond that you cannot go. For this reason, we believe it is a mistake to try to prove God's existence or the veracity of Scripture from evidence (which is evaluated by fallible humans) to the pagan mind. You prove God's existence to the pagan by showing him that without the Christian deity nothing is provable because truth would not exist, leaving the nonchristian himself with no significance and in a lost state. If you do not begin with the Christian God you are a humanist. What else is there?

D. The Major Contours of the Christian Worldview

The following is derived from a systematic study of Scripture. Another name for a full-blown Christian worldview is a systematic theology.

1. An eternal, infinite, triune God exists. He is personal, transcendent, immanent, sovereign and good. This God has revealed Himself propositionally in space and time. Each word used here is important and essential (but certainly not exhaustive).
2. God created the cosmos (all that is) *ex nihilo* to operate with a uniformity of natural causes in an open system. The "uniformity of natural causes" makes science possible. "An open system" makes miracles possible.
3. Human beings were created in the image of God in order to commune with God and to rule for God. They therefore, possess attributes analogous to God's own, i.e., personality, self-transcendence, intelligence, morality, gregariousness and creativity.
4. The state of the creation and man as they now are, are not as they were originally created. Man and the cosmos are deeply affected by the Fall.
5. For each person death is either the gate to life with God and His people or the gate to eternal separation from the only One who can ultimately fulfill human aspirations.
6. Redemption is provided by God for the elect and ultimately will affect the whole cosmos. When a person is redeemed he is reinstated as God's theocratic representative on earth in the sense that he is God's ambassador (IICor. 5:20).
7. When God saves us He saves us *from* Himself (His wrath); He is a Holy god. He also saves us *by* Himself and *for* Himself.
8. Ethics is transcendent and is based on the character of God as good (holy and loving). Because this is true, moral absolutes exist. If God does not exist, then neither does right and wrong, only personal preference.
9. History is purposeful (teleological), a meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfillment of God's plan. History is literally *His story*.

III. Summary: To the Christian, Theology is the queen of the Sciences!

The Christian cannot be satisfied so long as any human activity is either opposed to Christianity or out of all connection with Christianity. Christianity must pervade not merely all nations, but also all of human thought. The Christian, therefore, cannot be indifferent to any branch of earnest human endeavour. It must all be brought into some relation to the gospel. It must be studied either in order to be demonstrated as false, or else in order to be made useful in advancing the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom must be

advanced not merely, extensively, but also intensively. The church must seek to conquer not merely every man for Christ, but also the whole of man. J. Gresham Machen

Some Basic Resources:

(Of the books listed below I recommend the books by Grenz and Sire for initial reading ,and for Study groups.)

Blamires, Harry. *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?*

Clark, Gordon H. *A Christian View of Men and Things.*

Colson, Charles, and, Pearcey, Nancy. *How Now Shall We Live?*

Dockery, David S. and, Thornbury, Gregory Alan. Editors. *Shaping A Christian Worldview.*

Grenz, Stanley J. *What Christians Really Believe & Why.*

Holmes, Arthur. Ed. *The Making of a Christian Mind.*

Sire, James W. *Beginning with God.*