

“Developing a Christian Mind” II
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Introduction:

“The problem is not only to save souls,” said Charles Malik in an address given at the dedication of the Billy Graham Center some 20 years ago at Wheaton College in which he chided the evangelical church for its anti-intellectualism.

The problem is not only to save souls, but to save minds. If you win the whole world and lose the mind of the world, you will soon discover you have not won the world. Indeed, it may turn out that you have actually lost the world.”

J. Gresham Machen, some 60 years earlier in a speech at Princeton Seminary made a similar point:

False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion. Under such circumstances, what God desires us to do is to destroy the obstacle at its root. (Christianity and Culture)

Given the central significance of shaping a Christian mind, what we would like to do this afternoon is to take a little bit deeper look into *three content aspects* of the Christian mind, and to suggest how each has relevance for classical Christian education. I will then conclude by offering a few practical suggestions as to how a Christian mind might be best developed. All along I want to remind you of one of my chief concerns and that is how classical Christian schools and classical Christian education, could and should serve as *a major source for the revival of a genuine, biblically based Christian mind in our era.*

Now the *three specific content aspects* of the Christian mind I would like to develop are:

1. A Christian metaphysic
2. A Christian epistemology
3. A Christian ethic.

- The first of these on metaphysics will focus on a *sacramental perspective on reality*
- The second of these on epistemology will concentrate on the *covenantal character of knowledge*.
- The third of these will be devoted to the *supremacy of the virtue of love*.

In other words, we want to take a closer look at a Christian mind on what is *real*, and what is *true*, and what is *good*. So on to consider a Christian mind on metaphysics.

I. A Christian Mind on Metaphysics

One well-known Christian spiritual that is still sung on occasions these days has it that *This world is not my home, I'm a just a passing through*. This tends to foster what I call the *orbit effect*, where Christians believe that it is their obligation to circle above real life on the earth as much as possible, touching down only when absolutely necessary. Undoubtedly behind this song is a subtle, or perhaps not so subtle, Gnosticism or manicheanism or Platonism that encourages detachment from the “viscosity of existence” as Greg Wolfe calls it.

On the other hand, there is another well-known Christian hymn that also is still common in church services these days which has it that *This is my Father's world*.

This is my Father's world,
 The birds their carols raise;
 The morning light, the lily white
 Declare their Maker's praise.
 This is my Father's world,
 He shines in all that's fair.
 In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,
 He speaks to me everywhere. (Maltbie D. Babcock)

Underlying these lyrics is a robust doctrine of God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. Instead of a world-denying gnosticism or manicheanism or Platonism, here there is a world-affirming Hebraism or outlook on the created order that is rooted in the OT and the thought of the Israel. Here we also see the doctrinal perspective of the NT, and a point of view that the Christian church in her better moments has also embraced.

Now the key point I would like to make is simply this: that the first song (This World is not My Home) is wrong, and that the second song (This is My Father's World) got it right. And in this second song are clues to the Christian mind on matters metaphysical and sacramental.

- For indeed it ascribes the existence and character of the universe to God.
- It presents the cosmos as the realm of the divine glory
- It affirms that God is responsible for everything in life that is fair and good
- It teaches that God's revelation is found in everything for those with ears to hear and eyes to see.

This is what I would call a *sacramental perspective on reality*, that is, a view of the universe as shot through with the presence, wisdom, love, and revelation of God. Or as Gerard Manley Hopkins puts it in one of his most famous poems, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God."

The *Biblical basis* for this conception of creation, of the real world, is plentiful:

- Genesis 1-2 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth!
Gen. 1: 31 God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good.
- Psalm 19: 1-2. The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech, And night to night reveals knowledge.
- Psalm 24: 1. The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.
- Ps. 29:9 The voice of the \Lord\ makes the deer to calve, And strips the forests bare, And in His [creation] temple everything says, "Glory!"
- Psalm 104: 24. O Lord, how many are Thy works! In wisdom Thou hast made them all; The earth is full of Thy possessions.
- Isaiah 6: 3. And one [angel] called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the fullness of the earth is His glory" (lit. Heb. reading).
- Romans 1:20. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.
- Col. 1:16 For by Him all things were created, {both} in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created by Him and for Him. Col. 1:17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

On the basis of texts like these, the Reformer *John Calvin* asserted in one of his sermons that "God has...ordained the world to be like a *theater* upon which to

behold his goodness, righteousness, power, and wisdom.”ⁱ Calvin points out in his *Institutes*, however, that not only does the world have this grand doxological purpose (glory purpose), but that the creation was something that God made for people to take delight in and to enjoy. Indeed, the two are connected, for God is glorified when people take delight in and enjoy the world he made.

He explains this purpose of creation in these eminently quotable words:

In grasses, trees and fruits, apart from their various uses, there is beauty of appearance and pleasantness of odor.... Has the Lord clothed the flowers with the great beauty that greets our eyes, the sweetness of smell that is wafted upon our noses, and yet will it be unlawful for our eyes to be affected by that beauty, or our sense of smell by the sweetness of that odor? What? Did He not distinguish the colors as to make some more lovely than others? What? Did He not endow gold and silver, ivory and marble, with a loveliness that renders them more precious than other metals or stones? Did not God, in short, render many things attractive to us, apart from their necessary use?ⁱⁱ

For Calvin, God indeed shines in all that was fair, and His God spoke to him everywhere! The renown reformed from Geneva with his vigorous Christian mind, I think it is safe to say, embraced a sacramental perspective on reality.

Outside the protestant world, this point of view on the world is also present in a profound way. For example, Russian orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann in his delightful little book, *For the Life of the World*, offers a rich description of the Orthodox view of the world as the sacrament of God. For Schmemmann, creation, fall, and redemption must be understood in this deeply spiritual manner. In creation, we are to recognize God in everything, even in food, and give thanks. Schmemmann calls this the eucharistic approach to life in which we express gratitude to God for creation and its many gifts, all of which are designed to make Him known.

“All that exists is God’s gift to man, and it all exists to make God known to man, to make man’s life communion with God. It [the world] is divine love made food, made life for man. God blesses everything He creates, and, in biblical language, this means that He makes all creation the sign and means of His presence and wisdom, love and revelation: “O taste and see that the Lord is good.”

But because of the fall of humanity into sin, we no longer recognize God in anything, we are blind to the glory of creation, and fail to give thanks. The eucharistic perspective is lost.

Man has loved the world, but as an end in itself and not as transparent to God. He has done it so consistently that it has become something that is

‘in the air.’ It seems natural for man to experience the world as opaque, and not shot through with the presence of God. It seems natural not to live a life of thanksgiving for God’s gift of a world. It seems natural not to be eucharistic.”

But thanks be to God for redemption, for Jesus Christ gave his flesh for the life of the world as John 6: 51 teaches. As a result, we are able to see God once again in all things, even food, especially the meal of thanksgiving — the Lord’s Supper — the Eucharist, which discloses the meaning of the whole creation and how we should be thankful for it.

“... in Christ, life — life in all its totality — was returned to man, given again as sacrament and communion, made Eucharist.”ⁱⁱⁱ

How exciting to see that there is a meeting of the minds, Calvin’s and Schmemmann’s, one Protestant and one Orthodox, in formulating a Christian mind on metaphysics. Both add their unique insights in presenting a more or less unified point of view on character of the cosmos as God’s handiwork, a cosmos that glorifies Him, reveals his character, blesses human beings, and sparks expressions of gratefulness to Him for it all.

What is the upshot of this outlook for educators? Three things briefly.

1. Students need to make the wonderful rediscovery of the world as God’s creation, and to cultivate a sacramental perspective on life. These truths need to become a part of the student’s mental framework by which they think, study, work and live.
2. Students ought to realize the holy character of the things that they study and that their studies themselves are holy in character.

Whatever the discipline, from the humanities to the social and natural sciences to the arts, teachers and students both are standing on holy ground in their interactions with it. With this mindset, education takes on unimaginable depth and significance and becomes an exercise in discipleship and sanctification.

3. As a result, students and teachers must learn to give thanks for the gift of a world, for the privilege of learning about it, and for the responsibility of being its wise and careful stewards.

This world is not home? Don’t believe it. This is My Father’s world!
Such is the nature of reality. But what of the true?

II. A Christian Mind on Epistemology

In discussing epistemology, or views of knowledge and knowing, questions like these often arise:

- Is knowledge possible?
- What are the obstacles to knowledge?
- What are the sources of knowledge?
- What is the nature of knowledge itself?
- Is our knowledge valid, certain, justified?
- What are the basic theories of truth?

In considering such matters, my students discover quickly that *there is more to human knowing than human knowing will ever know!* Epistemology is a vast and complex subject, and there is much disagreement in this discipline. But there is a biblical view of knowledge, a Christian mind on epistemology, and it makes a rich contribution to conversation, and is certainly educationally relevant. We as teachers would be wise to familiarize ourselves with a Christian perspective on the knowing process, since much of our work is epistemological in nature, and much of our time is spent trying to get across what we know to students. So I will present *three characteristics* about knowledge from a biblical perspective that coalesce to form Christian mind on this topic.

A. First of all, the Bible suggests that knowledge is existential or experiential in character.

For many people today, knowledge is primarily information, data, or facts. It consists of abstractions and theories that have been gathered by an objective, detached process that is supposed to help insure its accuracy and trustworthiness. The goal of teaching is to transfer those facts, that data, and that information from the full head of the teacher to the empty head of the student, the so-called **jug to mug** theory of teaching. Teaching is primarily information transfer. But Scripture offers a richer account.

The basic biblical words for knowledge (yada in Hebrew and ginosko in Greek) mean to know by experience, including an experience or knowledge of such things as suffering/affliction, disease/illness, joy/gladness, peace/love. Knowledge is a genuine encounter with existence. The main words for knowing in both the OT and NT also designate sexual relations between husbands and wives: Adam knew Eve, for example, and gave birth to a son, and so on. To know implies intimacy and a relationship of care and concern. Hence, according to the Bible, knowledge is not abstract or theoretical in character; it is not merely objective data, or sterile information, or a set of detached facts. Rather, knowledge means an existential encounter, in-depth experience with God and with existence itself, with creation in all its forms —natural, social, cultural.

Knowledge is something that is concrete, personal, solid, real, and meaningful, regardless of subject area. This it seems to me is the way in which we ought to know our own disciplines, with passion, interest, and engagement. The way, for example, Nobel Prize winning scientist Barbara McClintock studied and knew the “transposable elements in the genetic make up of corn.”

Yes, you heard me right: “transposable elements in the genetic make up of corn.” Her work was so complex and meticulously documented that it was not well received by her colleagues when she first presented her findings. Despite this set back she returned to her work with greater determination. One colleague said of her: “It was a great thing to see. She was really getting such intense joy out her work.” When finally awarded the Nobel Prize in 1983, she said that it seemed unfair to reward a person for having so much pleasure in one’s work over the years. She connected her discoveries to the thrill she experienced of being so intensely absorbed in her work. To solve a complex problem, she said, you must feel it. Her work was always accompanied by great joy.

Perhaps you can relate to Barbara McClintock in your own disciplinary pursuits, and perhaps you know colleagues like her who are consumed with and passionate about their areas of study, and thereby exemplify a Christian mind on epistemology that recognizes the existential and experiential character of knowledge.

Second, the Bible affirms that knowledge is a function of the whole person, not just the intellect.

For many, knowledge is purely cognitive, a function of the intellect, a brain-thing, nothing more. According to many modernist thinkers, the goal is to isolate the mind so it can obtain knowledge in an objective, detached manner unaffected by any other influential factor inside or outside the knowing person. Let the mind work as an independent, isolated machine grinding out the facts, the data, the information. It matters little who, what, or where you are as long as the mind is free and unencumbered to do its tasks.

According to Scripture, however, people are God’s image and likeness, unified and centered in the heart. The word heart is used about 1000 times in the Bible, and these uses show that it is the seat and source of knowledge, affections, and will. It is the place where we think, feel, and choose. It constitutes a person’s core, center, and identity. All these functions of the heart are tied together into a unity and operate together. There is, or should be, an integrity and wholeness to the inner life and the way a person knows.

The heart is like the Trinity. As the three persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, so the mind, affections and will are unified in the one human heart. This means that the functioning mind cannot be cordoned off, isolated, or separated in its activity, but is implicated in everything else we are and do:

- What we **know** affects what we love and do.
- What we **love** affects what we know and do.
- What we **do** affects what we know and love.

Knowledge, character, and morality are all intimately intertwined in the heart. And here is what this means. It means that a person's intellectual life is a function of his or her spiritual and moral condition, and that one's spiritual and moral condition has deep implications on one's intellectual life. To invert the proverb, as a man is in his heart, so he thinks. Thinking itself is a function of the heart and its condition. For as a Christian mind proposes, knowledge is not just an activity of the intellect alone, but a function of whole person.

Third, the Bible says that knowledge is covenantal.

For many people, knowledge incurs very little, if any, sense of responsibility to do or to become what they know. After all, if knowledge is just data, facts, information, then the goal of knowing is primarily information, fact, and data mastery, not character formation or responsible action. In other words, people have little if any sense of a connection:

- between epistemology and ethics,
- between what they know and how they live,
- between truth and life.

But a biblically based epistemology emphasizes the connection between knowing and doing, belief and behavior, convictions and conduct, and between learning and life. Specifically, the Bible teaches that the purpose of acquiring knowledge is not just for knowledge itself, but to foster obedience to the covenant that binds God and His people, Christ and his church. Biblical epistemology is covenantal in character.

The NT is replete with passages that make this connection.

Matt. 7:24 ¶ "Therefore everyone who **hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them**, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.

Matt. 7:26 "And everyone **who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them**, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.

Matt. 28:20 **teaching them to observe** all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. "

John 13:17 "If you know these things, **you are blessed if you do them**.

James 1:22 But prove yourselves **doers of the word**, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

As my friend Steve Garber wrote in his book, *The Fabric of Faithfulness*, "Knowing and doing, hearing and obeying are integrally connected for people whose convictions are truly and deeply Christian."

The implications of Christian mind on the epistemology are significant educationally in several ways.

1. First of all, that knowledge is existential has *pedagogical* implications.

Teachers ought to teach and students ought learn a discipline, not just as a set of facts, data, or information to be transferred to their minds, but in terms of a genuine relationship of engagement, encounter, and concern with a subject area that has the potential to change their lives.

2. Second, that knowledge is a function of the total individual has *personal implications*.

Knowledge is not taught or acquired in a vacuum, but is always affected by the moral conditions, religious commitments, basic faith, and the fundamental loves teacher and student alike. Our capacity for truth is always related to the content and condition of our hearts. Education as a whole person enterprise requires heart work as well as head work, else our efforts be spent in vain.

3. Third, that knowledge is covenantal has *moral implications*.

Someone once said, wisely, that we only really know and believe that which activates us. No concomitant action, no real knowledge. No obedience, no true belief. Hence, teachers and students must realize the profound implications of the simple statements: "I know," or "I believe," for if they don't follow through in life, they know not and believe not, but are hypocrites.

These three features of a Christian mind on epistemology make it clear that there is more to human knowing than human knowing will ever know. So we move on from a Christian mind on the real to the true and now to the good

III. A Christian Mind on Ethics

One question that I enjoy asking my intro to philosophy students is this: who is really well off? Who's got it good? Who is really on the top of the world? In asking these questions, I bring them into the domain of ethics, and a particular concern in ethics about the greatest good, the ultimate end, the final goal of human life. In more technical ethical terms, this is a question about the *summum bonum*, the question about the very best way to live one's life.

Our contemporary culture has various answers to this inquiry:

- Some say those really well off, living the life are immersed in sensual experiences. Pleasure, pleasure, pleasure and more pleasure is the good life
- Others suggest that those on top of the world are filthy rich who can buy whatever they want. Things, things, things, and more things is where it is at.
- Still other people believe that the truly good life is found in being famous, well known for one's achievements. Fame, fame, fame and more fame is most important.

The answers to these questions aren't really hard to come up with. One can just take a look at our culture, and see what people live for! Or open the NT and read 1 John 2: 15-17 which says that the world considers the greatest goods in life to be the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life: sensualism, materialism and egotism respectively.

But when it comes to the very best way to live one's life, the Bible suggests something quite different. A Christian mind on this mother of all questions about who is really well off is this: the one who whose life is focused on the supreme virtue of love, especially love for God and love for one's neighbor as one's self. This is the uniform teaching of the OT and NT.

The cardinal Jewish confession of faith known as the *Shema* asserts that the supreme duty of Israel centered on the love of God. It is found in Deut 6: 4-9.

Deut. 6:4 "Hear, O Israel! The \Lord\ is our God, the \Lord\ is one! Deut. 6:5 "And you shall love the \Lord\ your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

The OT also commanded that each person should love his neighbor like he loves himself, as Lev. 19: 18 teaches:

Lev. 19:18 'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.

Of course, when Jesus was asked about the Greatest Commandment by a Scribe, He combined these two OT texts to form his answer. In Mark 12: 29-31, Jesus said:

Mark 12:29 "The foremost commandment is, '\Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord\'; Mark 12:30 \and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength\.' Mark 12:31 "The second is this, "\You shall love your neighbor as yourself\.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

In another passage, Jesus emphasized love again, declaring that the mark of the Christian — that the distinctive Christian tattoo — if you will, is Christ-like love for one another. In the upper room discourse (or Jesus' commencement address as some call it), in John 13: 33-34, He said:

John 13:33 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. John 13:34 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

From all these texts, I think we are beginning to get the point about the supremacy of the virtue of love, of love for God and neighbor, as the chief good and ultimate goal of human life.

St. Paul puts the finishing touches on this truth in 1 Cor. 13 — the love chapter — where he demonstrates clearly that of the top 3 theological virtues — faith, hope, and love — love is the greatest of them all.

Jonathan Edwards, that 18th century American theological giant, has explained and defended the supremacy of the virtue of love in his powerful little book *Charity and Its Fruits* which is an exposition of 1 Cor. 13. His thesis is, using 18th parlance, is "that all the virtue that is saving, and that distinguishes true Christians from others, is summed up in Christian love." In support of this point, Edwards shows that all of the greatest spiritual gifts, and that all of the greatest spiritual services are absolutely nothing without love, and that the one who does them is absolutely nothing without love. His basis, of course, is the first 3 verses of 1 Cor 13.

1 Cor. 13:1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 1 Cor. 13:2 And if I have {the gift of} prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 1 Cor. 13:3 And if I give all my possessions to feed {the poor,} and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

Love, therefore, as we said back in the 60s, is simply the greatest. The Christian mind says that the person who is really well off, who's got it good, who is on top of the world is the person for whom the virtue of love is supreme for love for God and neighbor is the supreme end of human life. And that means that it is the supreme love for education as well. Here is the punch line:

That students and teachers with Christian minds recognize that the ultimate goal of education is love, to become better lovers of God and better lovers of our neighbors, even as we love ourselves through studying, teaching, and learning process.

On the basis of a sacramental perspective on reality, the things we study ought to be a doorway to knowing and loving God better. After all, it is his creation and his things in his creation that we study in school, and in learning about and loving the creation we come to learn about and love the Creator that much more! On the basis of a biblical epistemology, the things we come to **truly** know and believe are put into practice as a way of loving, serving, and blessing our neighbors. Most go to school for the purpose of self-promotion, but the Christian mind affirms that the goal is to become a better lover of your neighbor, even as you love yourself through your education. As Bernard of Clairvaux puts it in these beautiful words:

“There are many who seek knowledge for the sake of knowledge: that is curiosity.
There are others who desire to know in order that they may themselves be known: that is vanity.
Others seek knowledge in order to sell it: that is dishonorable.
But there are some who seek knowledge in order to edify others: that is love.”¹

Given the target of love for God and neighbor as the end of all human action, including education, I would offer this conclusion:

That the ultimate goal of Christian education is to not just to produce scholars, or workers, or athletes, and so on. Rather, the ultimate goal of

¹ Quoted in Mark Schwehn, *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 60.

Christian education ought to be to produce SAINTS, saints through their studies, as they come to love God and others more.

So there are three content aspects of the Christian mind:

1. A Christian mind on metaphysics: a sacramental perspective on reality.
2. A Christian mind on epistemology: knowledge as existential, holistic, and covenantal.
3. A Christian mind on ethics: love is the final end of human life, the supreme virtue, and the greatest goal of Christian education.

Now let's recall a basic thesis, that classical Christian schools and classical Christian education, could and should serve as *a major source for the revival of a genuine, biblically based Christian mind in our era*, one just like we have described. So, how can this be done? What steps need to be made in our lives and in our schools to achieve this goal? Let me make the following practical suggestions in no particular order.

IV. Practical Suggestions for Forming a Christian Mind (in no particular order)

A. Vision factor:

Educational institutions and individuals involved in education (administrators and teachers) must have a vision for the foundational importance of developing a Christian mind. There must be a vision for developing a Christian mind in administrators, teachers, students, and I would also say as far as is possible, in the families of students as well, esp. parents. When and only when this task becomes a top priority, will Christian mind formation be deliberately and skillfully pursued. Somebody with the vision, therefore, administrator or teacher, must rise to the challenge, lead the charge, and chart the way. Otherwise, little if any progress on this front will ever be made at all.

B. Mentor factor

If a Christian school, its administrators and teachers, want students to develop a Christian mind, then they themselves must have a Christian mind as the absolutely necessary prerequisite. A couple of my favorite adages go like this:

“You cannot impart to others what you do not possess yourself.”

“Those who would kindle others must themselves also burn.”

The implication is obvious: administrators and teachers must be engaged intensely in the process of developing a Christian mind themselves, and be a bit farther down the road, if they hope in any way shape or form to impart a Christian mind to their students. Ablaze they must be if they want to ignite others in this venerable process. They must have own it themselves if they want to give it away. It's that simple. Hence, it may be necessary first to educate the educators, teach the teachers, and train the trainers in this process of acquiring the mind of Christ if there is any hope of the students ever catching on.

C. The Community factor

But Christian mind formation is not just an individual matter, but also a communal affair. The power of communities to shape human lives, attitudes and actions is overwhelming. The friends we make, make us. For example, the Greeks knew very well that individual consciousness was shaped in the image of the culture of the city-state. Similarly in Scripture,

Prov. 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

1 Cor. 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." Conversely, good company cultivates good morals.

Thus not only are individual mentors indispensable in the pursuit of a Christian mind, but so also is the group, the community of which both administrators, teachers and students are a part. Hence, a culture of biblical thinking must be developed to support, and to be supported by, those who aspire to live according to the mind of Christ. Creative ways of cultivating a culture for the Christian mind must be explored, ways that include rich conversation, good books, aesthetic experiences, public presentations, excellent teaching and so on. When neophytes are immersed in such an environment for the first time, it should be contagious, and not take long before they are transformed into its image by the vision of shaping their own minds for Christ and His kingdom.

D. Discipline factor

Make no mistake: developing a Christian mind is no cake walk. The cookies aren't necessarily on the lower shelf. To be sure, the Christian mind is a gift of God and His grace, but it is also a task. It takes hard work. Like the Promised Land in the OT, God gave it to Israel, but they also had to fight for it. So too with the Christian mind: it takes disciplined effort to achieve it. As Paul says in Tim. 4:7 "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." We have to set the culture of mass distraction aside, and commit ourselves to the tasks of reading, studying, praying, writing, talking, thinking, reflecting, obeying, applying, and so on, as God the Holy Spirit causes sound, solid, incremental growth over an extended time. It requires perseverance: one swallow does not a summer make. One book or lecture does not a Christian mind make. It simply takes time and patience! When God wants to grow a squash, he takes 6 weeks, but when he wants to make an oak tree, he takes 60 years. Forming a Christian mind, in other words, is a lifelong task of disciplined effort. But the results are well worth it.

E. Curriculum factor

There is no more crucial decision made by educators than the curriculum or content or canon of a program of education. The curriculum for an educated Christian mind is no less significant. What should that curriculum be?

Scripture is primary. Students must know the historical background, cultural setting, authorship, outline, content, and themes of each biblical book. There is also a need to understand the overall outline of the Bible, the essential elements of its plot or story line, the essentials of a biblical worldview.

Theological and ethical studies. Students must read books that unpack the basic doctrines of the bible, and books that convey the implications of that theology on daily life and practice are also necessary.

Classic and contemporary works in the Christian tradition. Readings in the Church fathers, St. Augustine in particular, and in the medieval philosophers and theologians, Aquinas in particular, the protestant reformers, the puritans, the catholic and orthodox writers,

Creative works in the Christian literary and poetic tradition must be included (Dante, Chaucer and so on), right on up to the best among contemporary writers in Britain and America. These would include writers such as Chesterton, Lewis,

Sayers, Williams, Tolkien, Schaeffer, Packer, O'Connor, L'Engle, Norris, and so on. Perhaps follow CS Lewis's advice in his essay, "On the Reading of Old Books," that for every new book you read, read three old ones! That way we overcome our all too typical cultural myopia!

Remedial studies in the liberal arts. As St. Augustine points out in his book *On Christian Doctrine*, it takes quite a bit of general knowledge in order to read the Bible well, especially knowledge of the basic liberal arts disciplines. For it is true that those who only know the Bible really don't know the Bible. Hence, upgrading your knowledge in history, literature, geography, logic, politics, and literature can be very helpful in reading the Bible well.

Finally, cross cultural studies and travel. Being able to see things from other points of view through books or by being there is one of the best ways to sharpen the focus of what one believes, and learn about the distinctive content of a Christian mind. One of the best things believers who are serious about Christian mind development is to read outside one's tradition and visit other places! By learning about other peoples, cultures, religions, philosophies, and ways of life, by comparison and contrast and challenge, one's own beliefs come into bold relief. What we are talking about here is a lifetime of learning for a lifetime of developing a Christian way of thinking and being in the world.

E. Affliction factor:

Aristotle taught that only adults could be truly educated, and one primary reason he gave for that viewpoint is that education takes deep root in the soil of a heart that has undergone and endured suffering. A heart that has seen trouble can appreciate that much more the things that are being learned and their importance. Scripture echoes that idea when it suggests that divine discipline and personal suffering serve as a catalyst to developing a Christian or biblical mindset. In Psalm 119: 67, 71, King David states:

"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word. It was good for me that I was afflicted that I may learn your statutes."

In the NT, the author to the Hebrews writes in 12: 10-11

"God disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness...and those trained by discipline, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

In 1 Peter 5: 10, the Apostle states:

And after you have suffered for a little, the God of all grace who called you to his eternal glory in Christ will himself perfect, confirm, strength and establish you.”

Victor Frankel once said that suffering enables us to move to a higher level of being, and that is true with reference to our pilgrimage in developing the mind of Christ. Suffering sanctifies.

F. Prayer factor

Undergirding the whole process of Christian mind formation, and perhaps most important of all is prayer: humbly going before the Father, telling him of your desire, and asking him in sincere faith to develop the mind of Christ within you. When we ask anything according to his will he hears us. Developing a Christian mind is His will. Thus he will hear, and he will answer! Pray that the God of all creation and all redemption will form within you the very mind of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by the power of the holy spirit who works within you in a way beyond which you could ever ask or think.

So, six practical suggestions for shaping a Christian mind:

1. Vision factor
2. Mentor factor
3. Community factor
4. Discipline factor
5. Curriculum factor
6. Faith factor

As classical Christian schools and education take a leading role in our era in shaping and renewing Christian minds, there are many areas that will need to be addressed. The issues and questions about which educators should would seek to form a Christian mind in themselves and students are legion: Work, vocation, economics, science, the environment, the arts, sport and play, education, the media, medicine and health care, and so on. Two that I think are particularly important for students today are in the areas of *technology and sexuality*. How desperately we need to have the mind of the Spirit on technology and the plethora of technological devices that we have come to depend upon and even worship.

We need to understand from a Christian point of view how created us as worshippers and as the makers of things, but he never created us to

worship the things that we make. Our technology has become a technologism (an ideology), and our devotion to technique itself with its emphasis on efficiency, has rob us of an appreciation for tradition, the inefficient, the non-quantifiable, the non-rational, and the transcendent. We need to grasp the vital role technology can play in our lives, as producers and users, but without turning it into God.

Additionally, how desperately we need to have the mind of the Spirit on the God-given gift of sexuality in our sexually saturated and perverse society.

We speak of the commodification of everything, and we may just as well speak of the sexualization of everything as well. With teen soap operas and shows like Dawson's Creek pushing the envelope farther than anyone ever thought it could, a Christian view of the body, sex and marriage is needed now more than ever. How we need to recovery a view of the holiness of the human body, the sacred character of sexuality itself, and the importance of upholding the honor of marriage and the marriage bed among all.

Classical Christian schools and classical Christian education is strategically placed to help foster *a genuine, biblically based Christian mind in these, and a multitude of other areas in the coming years*. It could be that the future of the church and the hope of the American republic depends upon your efforts at this, our strategic moment in history.

Conclusion:

In the film *A Beautiful Mind*, John Nash's psychiatrist, Dr. Rosen, told him "the problem is—your mind." When he said to Nash, he really spoke for us all. The problem is — our minds. For various reasons, every human being and every human mind on the face of the planet is to a greater or lesser extent, out of touch with what is real, what is true, and what is good. There is something of John Nash's beautiful mind in us all. There has been only one mind that has been truly beautiful altogether, only one mind that is in touch with and connected to reality, truth, and goodness, and that is the mind of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. In our mental destitution, what we did not know, and what we could not do for ourselves, God knew and did God do when He sent His only Son to rescue us, to save us, to deliver us from our blindness and error. And now in His grace He brought us to Himself through His Son and made us new creations, and gave us, yes, new minds, the truly beautiful mind of Christ Jesus our Lord.

For who has known the mind of the Lord that he should instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Have this mind in you that was also in Christ Jesus.

ⁱ Sermon on Eph. 3: 9-12, quoted in Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin*, foreword by Richard A. Muller (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), p. 113.

ⁱⁱ John Calvin, *Institutes* 3.10.2; quoted in Schreiner, p. 121.

ⁱⁱⁱ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), pp. 14, 16, 20.