

# Mind-renewal and living as a Christian today

*« Do not be conformed to the world but be transformed by  
the renewing of your mind » (Romans 12. 2)*

Paul Wells, Belfast, 25/3/14

# 1963 Harry Blamires began *The Christian Mind...*

There is still, of course, a Christian ethic, a Christian practice, and a Christian spirituality... **But as a thinking being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization.** He accepts religion - its morality, its worship, its spiritual culture; but he rejects the religious view of life, the view which sets all earthly issues within the context of the eternal (and) sees all things here below in terms of God's supremacy and earth's transitoriness, in terms of Heaven and Hell.

Francis Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*

# **Where we plan to go....**

- 1. Introduction, what is the mind?**
- 2. Being changed in mind**
- 3. The importance of the mind and our convictions**
- 4. Christ-like minds and world-views**

# **The problem: how can we be consistent with what we believe?**

**None of the philosophers  
were or are consistent:  
Rousseau, Schopenhauer,  
Marx, Heidegger...  
.... only Don Quixote was.....**



**How can we be consistent as  
Christians?**

# 1. What's the mind?

- Mind is closely related to *person*. In the same way we consider what a person is, we will see the mind.
- Are persons just random, a collection of chemical substances ? Or more ?
- In *The Concept of Mind* (1949), Gilbert Ryle rejected the mind-body dualism that sees man as a small machine with the mind as « ghost » governing it. The workings of the mind are not distinct from the actions of the body
- The Bible has a concrete way of describing human persons as entities with the calling and ability to react to things in the created world

## **2. What's the mind? God's mind**

- 1. The mind of God = his changelessness. God's thoughts belong to his person**
- 2. God's mind is God planning/ thinking/ acting/ communicating (not an independent faculty >> God's simplicity)**
- 3. God is rational, logical, all-wise and consistent. God's nature is expressed as he acts in line with his own laws of logic. His truth is always true**
- 4. Creation and providence come from the mind of God on the basis of divine rationality and so are structured with intelligence and finality**

### **3. What's the mind? Our mind**

- 1. Man is the image of God = a rational being**
- 2. « Mind events » and « brain events » - man a psychosomatic unity**
- 3. There can be a harmony between divine and human rationality = lining up with God**
- 4. DNA information coded in living cells**
- 5. God controls our nature and destiny through control of our genetic make-up. God must be able to control the thought process even of those who are opposed to him!  
1 Cor 12.18, 15.35-41**
- 6. Sin has noetic consequences on the contents of our minds, choices, desires, memory, feeling, affections.**
- 7. There can be mind changes. The power that directs us.**

## **4. What's the mind? Some common assumptions (media lies 1-4)**

- 1. The sociology of knowledge - we are bound to think according to our environment**
- 2. The confusion of technological progress and human progress. Things are getting better and better**
- 3. We are basically OK - human pride**
- 4. Human nature is normal**

**But a Christian point of view is that the content of our mind is either abnormal or normal**



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# A vital point in Romans...

Romans 12. 1

Jewish language for the Jews

Verse 2

Greek ideas for the Pagans

*Together they are to be united in one sort of thinking, action and worship*

*The way to a living and growing church, one that is different to the surrounding culture*

*This is not just about individuals but about the Church community*

# **Being transformed to a new world**

## **Yesterday, today, tomorrow**

### **Before becoming a believer?**

- Me was everything, God nothing
- You didn't even know it (1 Corinthians 2.14)

### **After becoming a believer?**

- God became EVERYTHING
- You want above all to please him

### **One day, in the future**

- You will be entirely HIS, like Jesus and with HIM

# What's the change?

*God works change in every Christian:*  
**A renewing on the inside which is invisible  
but real**

**Now:**

- « He who began a good work in you will complete it to the day of Christ » (Phil 1.7)**
- « God works in us the will to do » (Phil 2.13)**

# How ?

*God changed what I was...  
And he is progressively changing me...*

**Only one reply to the How ? question in the  
Bible :**

- **By the Holy Spirit**
  - **By his Word**

**« You have been regenerated by an  
incorruptible seed, by the Word of God »  
(1 Pet 1. 21)**

# If so, Why

*are so many Christians seemingly not growing in grace...?*

- They limit faith to feelings and shun teaching (so did the Corinthians)
- They are not renewed in their **intelligence** by biblical truth
- Too many dichotomise faith and the rest of life
- *But experiences and feelings do not change lives (Media lie no. 5)*

# John Stott, *Your Mind Matters...*

*Perhaps the current mood of anti-intellectualism now begins to be seen as the serious evil it is. It is not true piety at all but part of the fashion of the world and therefore a form of worldliness. To denigrate the mind is to undermine foundational Christian doctrines.*

*Has God created us rational beings, and shall we deny our humanity which he has given us? Has God spoken to us and shall we not listen to his words? Has God renewed our mind through Christ, and shall we not think with it? Is God going to judge us by his Word, and shall we not be wise and build our house upon this rock? (Page 26)*

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**Marcus Aurelius**  
**(Roman emperor 121-180) got it right**



**« Our thought is a dye that  
colours everything we are as  
people »**

*Thoughts*

# Primacy of the intelligence?

- Many theologians say our feelings are *the main motors* and humans act out of **passion** (Pascal/Dabney)
- This is not in opposition to the Reformers' idea of the primacy of the intellect, that the mind evaluates and judges everything
- The **mind allows us to understand** what we feel, where we're headed, what our bodies tell us
- Without **a spirit of understanding**, we can't interpret our feelings, either joy or sadness

# Heart, mind, will, feelings

**The heart is the unity between the mind and the body with its feelings and will - Luke 6.45**

**The heart is **IN** the mind, the will and the feelings**

**The heart gives us **direction****

**A transformed mind comes from a regenerate heart**

**A renewed mind directs the **will** and speaks to the **feelings****

# **A change of heart**

**When God changes HEARTS he changes people**

**The heart acts on the MIND**

**The mind expresses new WILL to please  
God**

**H + M + W  
= changed EMOTIONS**

**« O God create in me a pure HEART, renew in me a good SPIRIT... Give me the JOY of your salvation and may a good WILL uphold me » (Ps 51.12-14)**

**The main work of God's Word...**

**God's Spirit does not produce nice  
feelings in us BUT**

**The Spirit speaks to our spirit to renew our  
mind,**

**Because our heart has been changed**

**An illustration...**

**« Don't you know that...? »**

**In 1 Corinthians 6 (2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19)**

**Paul uses « Don't you know that...? »**

**6 times**

**Not « don't you feel that ? » !**

**« Don't you know that sinners don't get into God's kingdom? »... Don't get it wrong...**

**You were like them... But you have been washed and justified by the blood of Christ » (9-11)**

# John Stott, *Your Mind Matters...*

*the fact that man's mind is fallen is no excuse for a retreat from thought to emotion, for the emotional of man's nature is equally fallen. Indeed, **sin has more dangerous effects on our faculty of feeling than our faculty of thinking**, because our opinions are more easily checked and regulated by revealed truth than our experiences. (Page 16)*

**WHY ?**

**BECAUSE OUR FEELINGS ESCAPE EASILY FROM REALITY, MORE EASILY THAN OUR INTELLIGENCE...**

**AND THEN WE LIVE IN A DREAM WORLD  
(aided and abetted by selfie fantasies)**

## **BEING CONVINCED...**

**When the heart is changed, it's a question not only of knowledge, but of *convictions***

***Our convictions make us act differently :***

**« We believe and so we speak, KNOWING THAT He who raised Jesus will raise us with Jesus KNOWING the fear of the Lord, we seek to CONVINCEN men... because the love of Christ has CONVINCED US THAT one died for all ... »**

**(2 Cor 4. 13,14; 5.11, 14)**



# Where do you get « conviction »?

## BY HOLDING ON TO WHAT BELONGS TO CHRIST...

- Nobody knows the salvation by being **half convinced**. You have to give yourself. There is something mysterious about it. The Holy Spirit makes the truth come true for us
- Calvin's « two graces » come from « possessing Christ »

*« He will lead you into all truth... He will take what is mine and give it to you » (Jn 16. 13-15).*

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# **Two exhortations to change our minds**

## **2 Corinthians 10.3-5**

**« take every thought captive to obey  
Christ »**

## **Colossians 2.8**

**« See to it that no one takes you  
captive by philosophy and empty  
deceit... and not according to  
Christ... »**

# **Having a mind like Christ...**

**When Christians fill their minds with Christ  
they will start to become like him**

**Jesus shows us what true humanness is :**

- Confidence, love and hope in God**
- Perfect obedience and joyful service**
- True love and compassion for the suffering**
- The courage to give oneself**
- A projet for life**
- Balance between liberty and responsablity**
- Sanctified feelings, including anger...**

## **A Christian world view criticises everything from top down, in a biblical perspective**



- **Jesus is Lord over all, above everything**
- **Our mind looks at everything from his perspective**
- **Everything is different from when we were down in the street**

# How does being critical work?

- **Not being critical of people in judging them. That is God's job**
- **The difference between judgment and discernment**
- **Taking distance from the life-style of the talking animals - pleasure and leisure**
- **Taking distance from the ideologies that control them (Marx, Darwin and Freud or « feel good » celebrity ideology)**
- **Making world-views as an alternative to theirs with Christian values**

# **BUT WHAT ARE CHRISTIAN VALUES ?**

**a renewed intelligence is a mind directed by  
God and informed by his Word**

***Motivations: is your aim to please the Lord?***

**A change of life will only come progressively from a renewed mind**

***Orientation: do you want to know the Lord?***

**In stead of pushing him off, he is your principal concern**

***Perspective: does God decide or you?***

**What God approves, you do; what he loves you love; what is against his truth is your mortal enemy**

***Steet-wise: get a spirit of discernment!***

**The opposite of error is truth. What is Christian lines up with God's truth and his right and wrong**

# Ready for a fight?



The Christian life is  
a  
fight to the death  
with our sin,  
the world  
and the devil  
(Col 3. 5, 12)

(and sometimes with other Christians)