



THE BEACON BEAM

March 2011

Truth for the Heart and Mind

The Glory of God and the Life of the Mind

By R. Albert Mohler, Jr.

Christianity honors the life of the mind, not because it celebrates the power of human intellect, but because Christ himself instructed Christians to love God with heart, soul, and mind.

To be human is to think, and to think is to operate within a worldview. Every individual operates out of a basic set of convictions about reality, truth, meaning, and how the world works. As thinking creatures, we create, perceive, absorb, and base our thinking upon certain intellectual assumptions that, in essence, allow the world to make sense to us.

There is nothing distinctively Christian about having a worldview. The very process of intellectual activity requires some framework, and no idea is independent of prior assumptions. As human beings, we can hardly begin each moment of intellectual activity without dependence upon assumptions that are, in essence, pre-philosophical. This is true for all human beings, regardless of the actual content and shape of their worldviews.

The great challenge for the Christian is to craft a worldview that is distinctively Christian in its shape, substance, and structure. This is no easy task, especially in an intellectually complex world that is marked by an incredible diversity of worldviews and ideologies.

In this generation, a growing number

of Christians understand the responsibility for developing a Christian worldview. Nevertheless, for many of these Christians, the development of a Christian worldview is reduced to certain principles of conviction that are assumed to lead to certain pragmatic conclusions and practical applications. There is no shortage of seminars, books, courses, and curricula directed toward the development of the Christian worldview. There is good reason to be thankful for this recovery of interest in developing a Christian worldview, but there is an even greater need to advance toward a more comprehensive understanding of the Christian worldview that finds its beginning and end in the glory of God.

Christianity recognizes and affirms the importance of the intellect. The life of the mind is understood to be a central issue of Christian discipleship. The Christian is not only to live in obedience to Christ, but is also to serve Christ through the development of a distinctively Christian mind.

All too many Christians ignore the intellectual component of discipleship. This tragic reality betrays a misunderstanding of the gospel, for the gospel of Jesus Christ requires cognitive understanding. In other words, there is a knowledge that is central to the Christian faith. As the apostle Paul makes clear in Romans 10, faith comes by hearing, and that

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Schedule of Services:

Sunday
Morning Worship...9:00 AM
Sunday School.....10:45 AM
Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

Wednesday
Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM
IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM
Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

Beacon Highlights for March

Special Events for March

01	Coffee n' Courage (<i>a.m. only</i>)	15	Coffee n' Courage
02	Teen Focus Groups	16	BJU Music Ministry
	IMPACT Clubs		(<i>No IMPACT Clubs</i>)
05	Church Family Film Night	17	Silver Saints
08	Coffee n' Courage	20	Members Meeting
	Deacons Meeting	22	Coffee n' Courage
09	IMPACT Clubs	23	IMPACT Clubs
12	Teen Homeplace Ministry	24	Men Sharpening Men
13	GO YE	29	Coffee n' Courage
	Lord's Table	30	IMPACT Clubs
	<i>Daylight-Saving Time Begins</i>		

Spring Bible Conference

*You are invited to join us for a time of spiritual refreshment
at our Spring Bible Conference,
April 3-6,
with Pastor Don Theobald,
from Ontario, Canada.
Worship Services on Sunday are 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.
and 7 p.m. Monday through Wednesday.*

Sympathy ~ We express our heartfelt sympathy to the families of:

Johnny Blalock	Margaret Hutcherson	Lydia Ruth Oakley
Edward Enoch	Dot Jordan	JoAnn Smith
Karen Graves		

The Beacon Broadcast

Monday thru Friday

WDJS 1430 AM (Mt. Olive, NC)	9:00 a.m.
WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN)	9:30 a.m.
WKBA 1550 AM (Roanoke, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WKPA 1390 AM (Lynchburg, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	2:00 p.m.

Sunday

WPCM 920 AM (Burlington, NC)	9:00 a.m.
WKXR 1260 AM (Asheboro, NC)	9:30 a.m.
WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WSML 1200 AM (Graham, NC)	8:30 p.m.
WLES 560 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:30 a.m.
KUTR 820 AM (Salt Lake City, UT)	11:00 a.m.
Harbour Light of the Windwards	9:30 p.m.
1400 AM/94.5 FM (Caribbean)	

March Member Birthdays

2	Fay Gettings
	Ted Barker
03	Jimmy Byrd
09	Gena Boswell
	Anita Byrd
13	Stuart Waugh
14	Dru Guthrie
15	Mary Ellen Crumpton
17	Scott Haizlip
19	Thad Boyd
	Gloria Hendry
25	Larry Hunter
29	Walt Atkins



March Missionary Birthdays

01	Mike Webster
12	Cheri Giuliani
13	Carol Bunyan
	Stuart Waugh
22	Ian Donell*

*Children of Missionaries

*Happy
Birthday!*

Beacon Pastors

Gregory N. Barkman	<i>Senior Pastor</i>
Michael R. Karns	<i>Minister of Christian Education</i>
Robert F. La Tour	<i>Minister of Families</i>
Gerald J. Counts	<i>Minister of Visitation</i>
Gregory L. Phillips	<i>Minister of Music</i>

Few doctrines divide God's people like the doctrine of election. Since both the word, "election" in its various forms, plus the concept using different words is found repeatedly in the Bible, some explanation must be offered. It cannot just be ignored. Although there are many varying shades of interpretation, in the end, it boils down to two possibilities. Either election means God chose His people without reference to anything He saw in man (unconditional election), or God chose people based upon something He saw or foresaw within them (conditional election). Since the Protestant Reformation, these two understandings have resulted in two different theologies, Calvinism, which holds to unconditional election, and Arminianism which champions conditional election. In truth, there are endless varieties within these two camps, and some prefer to avoid either label, but there are really only two positions on election, and for brevity's sake, I will use these historic labels.

In this article, I will examine a text that is often claimed by both sides of the debate. "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). Calvinists see this as a clear statement of unconditional election. God chose His people before the foundation of the world. Paul indicates that election begins with God, not man, and was settled before the world was created. This means election is unconditional, without reference to anything within the elect individual. Arminians do not think this text refers to salvation at all. They view it as God's determination that those whom He knew would choose Christ of their own free will, shall be made holy and blameless

as the result of God's work in their lives. Calvinists see a statement about unconditional election. Arminians see a promise of sanctification.

How should we understand this text? We begin by noticing that election is of individuals, not of

"It is obvious that both God and man cannot make the determinative choice."

operations or results. It says that God chose "us", that is individual people. It does not say God chose to do something in the lives of those who chose Him. True, it goes on to say that God has determined to do something in the lives of those He has chosen, namely to make them holy and blameless, but that is an extension of the first declaration that God chose individual persons. Arminians rush over the first part to focus upon the second, and then use their understanding of the second part to cancel out the first. That is poor exegesis. Calvinists see both parts of the text as referring to salvation. First, God determined to choose individuals for salvation. Second, He determined to make them holy and blameless, which is part and parcel of salvation. What is salvation? It is more than justification before the judgment bar of God. It is more than the promise of eternal life. It is God's determination to rescue sinners from condemnation and transform them into the image of His dear Son (Romans 8:29). This text

refers to the whole process, not simply a part.

Could it be otherwise? Could God choose individuals for Himself, and then allow them to remain unholy and blameworthy? Of course not. Salvation, properly considered, is a big word that describes everything God does from beginning to end to rescue fallen sinners. Salvation began in eternity past when God determined to rescue a large number out of Adam's fallen race, and concludes in eternity future when every one of God's elect children are presented faultless before the throne. Salvation includes many parts. Justification is one part. Sanctification is another. This text refers to the electing grace of God that marked us out for justification, and also promised our sanctification. The two parts of this text are similar to the two aspects of Ephesians 2:8-10. Part one: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Part two: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Salvation is God's gift of grace, His unmerited favor. He chose us, and He freely gave salvation to us. Part of that gracious gift of salvation is to direct us into good works, to walk holy and blameless before Him, imperfectly upon Earth, and perfectly when we arrive in Heaven. Exactly as the text says in Ephesians 1:4.

One of the pivotal issues in election is who goes first, God or man. If God chooses individuals based upon nothing within them, it is God who determines salvation. God is thus sovereign in salvation, just as He is in every other area. However, if God "chooses" based upon what He

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The book of Psalms, the inspired songbook of God's people Israel, expresses in poetry the worship and prayers offered to the LORD. In one hundred fifty psalms we learn and contemplate truths about who God is and what He has done. Even as the Psalms express personal grief, fear and pain, they bring their focus back to God who is the hope and relief of all who trust in Him. Meditating on the difficulties of life discourages the heart, but meditating on God and His wisdom, faithfulness and love brings hope and comfort.

God's people have sung Psalms in differing ways over the centuries. Much of the poetry of the Psalms is lost in our English translations, and we do not have any of the original music that would have been heard in the days of David and Asaph. (We are speaking of Psalms in English, of course, but believers of other languages and cultures have faced similar challenges in their efforts to sing Psalms.) Some Psalms fit well into translations and paraphrases that work as poetry and song for us, aiding our retention and praise. A metrical Psalm sets our English translation as closely as possible into poetry that we recognize using meter and rhyme. One of the oldest English paraphrases of Psalm 100 is still sung today:

*All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.
Him serve with mirth; His praise forth tell.
Come ye before Him and rejoice.*

Unfortunately, some metrical Psalms are neither good poetry nor good for singing; the joy of the praise of God is obscured by the structure forced on our English translation. This isn't a problem just for us 21st century believers, but has been the case for centuries. Isaac Watts, in his

preface to *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* of 1707 wrote of the sad state of Psalm singing: *While we sing the Praises of our God in his Church, we are employed in that part of Worship which of all others is the nearest akin to Heaven: and 'tis pity that this of all others should be performed the worst upon Earth.... To see the dull Indifference, the negligent and the thoughtless Air that sits upon the Faces of a whole Assembly, while the Psalm is on their Lips, might tempt even a charitable Observer to suspect the Fervency of inward Religion; and 'tis much to be feared that the Minds of most of the Worshippers are absent or unconcerned.* (In our day as well as

“Meditating on the difficulties of life discourages the heart, but meditating on God and His wisdom, faithfulness and love brings hope and comfort.”

Watts', that observation might well be made in many places, and it's not always the fault of the Psalm.) In response, Watts wrote hymns based on Psalms with two significant differences from his predecessors: His hymns are not exact translations or even paraphrases in many cases, and he made them "Christian."

Many of Watts' hymns are based on psalms, some more loosely than others. He was criticized by those who thought it wrong to sing "uninspired hymns." He responded that if we can pray to God in sentences that we have made up ourselves instead of confining ourselves to prayers taken directly from the Scriptures, then surely we can sing

to God in sentences of human composition.

He sought to bring the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ into Psalm singing. Again from the Preface: *When we are just entering into an Evangelic Frame by some of the Glories of the Gospel presented in the brightest Figures of Judaism, yet the very next Line... hath something in it so extremely Jewish and cloudy, that darkens our Sight of God the Savior: Thus by keeping too close to David in the House of God, the Veil of Moses is thrown over our Hearts.* Watts brought the revelation of Jesus into the Psalms and their promises with open and clear proclamations. With our new covenant understanding of Psalm 72, we no longer see Solomon, but rather the One who will reign forever. Ps. 72:5-8: *They shall fear You As long as the sun and moon endure, Throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the grass before mowing, Like showers that water the earth. In His days the righteous shall flourish, And abundance of peace, Until the moon is no more. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea.* Watts removed the veiled reference and wrote:

*Jesus shall reign where're the sun
Does his successive journeys run.
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore
'Till moons shall wax and wane no more.*

Another hymn/psalm of Watts is from Psalm 90. In vv. 1-2 we read the prayer of Moses: *Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.* Watts' powerful hymn from this Psalm helps us to pray:

*Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same.*

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The Glory of God and the Life of the Mind

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faith is established upon truth claims that are nonnegotiable and necessary for salvation.

Christian faithfulness requires the development of the believer's intellectual capacities in order that we may understand the Christian faith, develop habits of Christian thought, form intuitions that are based upon biblical truth, and live in faithfulness to all that Christ teaches. This is no easy task, to be sure. Just as Christian discipleship requires growth and development, intellectual faithfulness requires a lifetime of devoted study, consecrated thinking, and analytical reflection.

As Anselm of Canterbury, a leading Christian theologian of the 11th century, classically affirmed, the Christian task is well defined as "faith seeking understanding." In other words, the Christian faith honors intellectual responsibility and the life of the mind. The faith that justifies

sinners is a faith that requires a certain knowledge and then leads to a responsibility to advance in knowledge and understanding in order to move "from milk to meat" in terms of intellectual substance.

All this is necessary in order that the disciple would grow in grace and in understanding, but it is also necessary in order that Christians will grow in intellectual discernment. This intellectual discernment is a necessary component of the Christian's responsibility to know the truth, to love what is true, to discern the difference between truth and error, and to defend the faith "once for all delivered to the saints."

The Christian affirmation of the life of the mind has produced schools, colleges, universities, seminaries, and a host of other centers of intellectual activity. The rise of the university can be traced directly to the intellectual vigor of medieval Christianity. Christianity honors the

life of the mind and has made literacy a central issue of the church's concern. Christianity is a religion of the book – the Bible – and it is a faith that takes the tasks of reading and writing with profound seriousness.

In the end, Christianity honors the life of the mind, not because it celebrates the power of human intellect, but because Christ himself instructed Christians to love God with heart, soul, and mind.

The fact that God would command that we love him with our minds indicates in a most profound and unmistakable sense that our Creator has made us to know him in order that we would love him and to seek his glory above all else. Understood in this light, our intellectual capacity and the discipleship of the mind are to culminate in the development of a Christian worldview that begins and ends in the glory of the self-revealing God of the Bible.

You must remember this: You can never have a Christian mind without reading the Scriptures regularly because you cannot be profoundly influenced by that which you do not know. If you are filled with God's Word, your life can then be informed and directed by God — your domestic relationships, your child-rearing, your career, your ethical decisions, your interior moral life. The way to a Christian mind is through God's Word!

Again we must be careful not to create a Bible-reading legalism — "good Christians read the Bible through once a year." The Bible nowhere demands this. Some simply cannot read well, or fast, and speed reading is not the answer. As Lucy told Charlie Brown: "I just completed a course in speed reading and last night I read *War and Peace* in one hour!...It was about Russia."

Most people, however, will find that reading the Scripture through once a year is the best way because it requires only five pages a day and offers a reachable annual goal. Believers, whatever your ability, you must regularly read and study God's Word.

—R. Kent Hughes, *Disciplines of a Godly Man*

The entire package weighed only 8 ½ pounds and measured less than 2 feet in length. Smaller than a decorative pillow, lighter than a bag of groceries, but oh how important that package was! Entire families rearranged their lives for the arrival, traveling hundreds of miles and taking days off work to see. Evelyn Hope Newton...‘Evie’...joined the Newton family in January and we were reminded of just how big a stir such a tiny bundle can cause! Another little package is due for arrival in April in Massachusetts. For this baby boy, the first child of our third child, I’m now packing my car to drive 750 miles one way, just to make sure his room is ready. Not much more than a ‘spot on a blanket’, but quite the life-arranging event! Important things come in small packages.

The Bible speaks in most descriptive language about something much smaller than a new baby, weighing mere ounces instead of pounds, but one that can cause such a stir that we see it in the company of words like ‘deadly’ and ‘poison’. It is, of course, these tongues of ours...

“...Oh me! *If only I had kept my mouth shut. If only I’d thought before I spoke! How I wish I hadn’t said that!*” Haven’t we’ve all uttered those phrases? We speak before we think, say things we’ve *thought* but never intended to verbalize. We say something ‘that needed to be said’ only to realize it really didn’t need to be said after all. Scripture is clear on the seriousness of the matter of our speech, telling us that our religion is worthless if we do not bridle our tongues! “*If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless*” (James 1:26). Could it be that my tongue says *this* much about my heart?

We really must do something about our tongues, but what? Maybe looking at the converse of the issue would be helpful. Have you ever heard someone say something and thought, “I wish I’d said that!” What if, instead of working only on what we shouldn’t say, we worked on saying things we *should* say, the “Thou shalt’s” along with the “Thou shalt not’s”? What kind of speech displays a heart of genuine faith?

There’s only so much room in your hearts. Fill it with truth and there won’t be much room left for evil!

Let’s talk about just one area, that of *encouraging speech*. It’s been years since I read the book *Disciplines of a Godly Woman*, by Barbara Hughes; but I’ve thought often of a personal account she gave, of a night when her husband was struggling with discouragement and the feeling, in his words, ‘that God has called me to do something He hasn’t given me the gifts to accomplish.’ His conclusion was that God is not good.’ Read what she says about that night:

“When we think back on that long-ago night, Kent tells me that if I had answered him in any other way than the way I did, it would have been all he needed to ‘hang it up.’ If I had joined him in bitter recriminations and complaints about

our situation, he might have quit the ministry and spent the rest of his life attempting to prove his worth and God’s injustice. But, thanks to God, my answer was full of hope in God. ‘I don’t know what you’re going to do, but for right now, for tonight, hang on to my faith, because I believe. I believe that God is good. I believe that He loves us and is going to work through this experience. So hang on to my faith. I have enough for both of us.’” What a beautiful example of encouraging words spoken by a wife who probably was equally as discouraged and possibly even more fearful than her husband. Where did her encouraging words come from? From a heart that had been filled with true thoughts of God. Because she had a heart instructed in the ways of God, she had encouraging words for her discouraged husband. Her words displayed a heart of genuine faith!

Have you ever thought of preparing your heart for *speech* as you read and hear God’s word? We know that bitter and evil words come from the bitter and evil thoughts in our hearts... ‘for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks’. Why then do we continue to fail in our words? Because when we go to work on our speech, we usually start in the wrong place. The heart, not the mouth is the place to start.

There’s only so much room in your hearts. Fill it with truth and there won’t be much room left for evil!



Chosen for What?

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foresees man will choose, it is man, not God, who makes the determinative choice. Man is therefore sovereign in salvation. God may be sovereign in everything else, but not in salvation. Clearly election understood in this way is really not divine election at all. If man makes the first and determinative choice, then God does not really choose His people at all. He accepts those who choose Him. Man chooses God, but God does not choose man. We may call it God's choice, but it is really God's ratification of man's choice. The Arminian doctrine of election is a word game. Some may call it the doctrine of election, but it should be rightfully called the doctrine of ratification. According to this doctrine, God didn't choose anyone. Man's choice is first and determinative. God simply ratified man's choice.

The Arminian tries to preserve man's free choice at the expense of God's free choice. It is obvious that both God and man cannot make

the determinative choice. Someone must choose first, and someone must choose second. The question cannot be resolved by appealing to human logic, sentiment, or tradition. The correct answer must come from the Bible. It is true that the Bible speaks of men choosing Christ, and indicates that such choices determine eternal destiny. But the real issue is who chose first? The Bible teaches us that no man, left to himself, will ever choose Christ. He will not, he cannot (John 6:37, 44, 65, etc.). When we choose Christ, it is because God has already chosen us, and has done a work of grace within us to enable us to see our sinful condition and believe on Christ for salvation. Natural men, as they are born into this world, have no capacity to understand or choose spiritual truth (I Corinthians 2:14). We did not choose Christ in a vacuum. We did not choose Christ out of natural insight or capacity. We chose Christ because He first chose us, and is now doing everything necessary to bring us, holy and blame-

less before Him in love.

Chosen for what? Chosen for salvation. "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth" (II Thessalonians 2:13). Chosen for what? Chosen for sanctification. "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Ephesians 1:4). These are two aspects of the same salvation, and they are two operations upon the same individuals, the elect of God. Truly salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9). If you have Biblical warrant to believe yourself saved today, give all the glory to God, and to Him alone, for He has graciously chosen to reveal Himself to you, and work His salvation within you.

Psalms and Hymns

(Continued from page 4)

*Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.*

Psalm 103 is commonly sung by God's people, but Henry Lyte's hymn *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven* sings so well that many may not recognize the Psalm of David from which it springs. Praise for who God is and thanksgiving for what He has done go hand in hand in Psalm 103: *Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits.* The list of benefits in verses 2-10 is summarized in the

hymn's third line as *Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.* Don't pass over these concepts without thoughtful consideration; could there be any better cause to sing the praise of the LORD? We often omit the original fourth stanza of the hymn taken from vv. 15-19 which contrasts our life to that of the everlasting God:

*Frail as summer's flower we flourish,
Blows the wind and it is gone;
But while mortals rise and perish
Our God lives unchanging on,
Praise Him, Praise Him, Hallelujah
Praise the High Eternal One!*

May our singing of psalms and hymns reflect the truth of the scriptures and the truth that is in our hearts.



True Religion

LORD GOD ALMIGHTY,

I ask not to be enrolled amongst the earthly great and rich,
but to be numbered with the spiritually blessed.

Make it my present, supreme, persevering concern to obtain those blessings which are
spiritual in their nature,
eternal in their continuance,
satisfying in their possession.

Preserve me from a false estimate of the whole or a part of my character;
May I pay regard to my principles as well as my conduct, my motives as well as my actions.
Help me never to mistake the excitement of my passions
for the renewing of the Holy Spirit,

never to judge my religion by occasional impressions and
impulses, but by my constant and prevailing disposition.

May my heart be right with thee, and my life as becometh the gospel.

May I maintain a supreme regard to another and better world,
and feel and confess myself a stranger and a pilgrim here.

Afford me all the direction, defense, support, and consolation my journey hence requires,
and grant me a mind stayed upon thee.

Give me large abundance of the supply of the Spirit of Jesus, that I may be
prepared for every duty,

love thee in all my mercies,
submit to thee in every trial,
trust thee when walking in darkness,
have peace in thee amidst life's changes.

Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief and uncertainties.

—The Valley of Vision

The Beacon Beam

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