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“A Vision of the Heart—
A Biblical Worldview and Christian Higher Education”

Introduction:

Has anyone ever accused you of being a “heavy thinker” or a “problem thinker,” or recommended that you attend a “TA” meeting, “Thinkers Anonymous? Well, here is one person’s story!

“The Heavy Thinker”¹

Well, we begin with a little fun, but we are going to do some pretty heavy thinking this morning. So, if there are any recovering thinkers in the group this afternoon, I’ll give you this opportunity to slip out quietly now before we begin so as to avoid temptation!

Perhaps you have had an experience like mine when a book seemed to force itself on you and you realize, for reasons unknown at the time, you better go read it. Such was the case recently with me and the book was a fairy tale titled *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. First, a student in one of my classes mentioned she loved *The Little Prince* and had been reading it and that it had parallel themes to C. S. Lewis’s *The Abolition of Man*. The Lewis connection certainly raised my curiosity.

So I checked it out of the library and had it on my desk when another student entered, saw it lying there yet unread, and said it was one of her favorite books. Then a couple of nights later, I was headed to my car after work and bumped into a former student who was reading . . . you guessed it—*The Little Prince!* And during this same time period, another student’s father visited my philosophy or religion course, and in a brief conversation before class, he spontaneously quoted a famous line from . . . yep again, *The Little Prince!*

So I sat down ASAP to read the small volume and also a book of criticism on the text. Here is how the story goes. The Little Prince lived on asteroid B-612 where he cleaned 3 volcanoes and took care of a single rose. But he left the lonely

¹ (available on-line by plugging in “the heavy thinker” in any search engine).

asteroid in search of friendship and for the sake of an education. The Little Prince visits seven planets where he learns what most people think are “matters of consequence,” though they are sadly mistaken. Finally, he meets a fox who shares with him a simple secret of what truly matters in life:

And the LP went back to meet the fox. Good bye said the LP. Good bye said the fox. And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.”

With this and other lessons in mind, the Little Prince eventually returns home to his asteroid B-612, and the narrator concludes “there is sweetness and laughter in the stars.”

“Matters of consequence.” That phrase has stuck with me, and that is why I think I was led, perhaps providentially, to read this book.

- What do people think are matters of consequence in the modern or postmodern world?
- Fashion trends? Weather patterns? The pennant race? Upward mobility? Tax breaks? The internet? The price of gasoline? Or what?
- What are matters of consequence in our lives as Christian believers?
- And specifically for our purposes today: What are matters of consequence in Christian higher education and in our work as Christian educators, scholars, professors and administrators?

I would like to propose for your consideration that when it comes to the enterprise of Christian higher education, this issue of relating “a biblical worldview to Christian higher education” is a matter of consequence, indeed, a matter of great and genuine consequence.

One very prominent international Christian leader (Pope John Paul II) asserted that church-related university professors must “set the content, objectives, methods, and results of their teaching, research, and service *within the framework of a coherent Christian vision of the world.*” And the highly esteemed Christian writer and thinker Richard John Neuhaus recently stated that “A Christian university will settle for nothing less than a comprehensive Christian account of reality, wrestling not only with the *what and how* of things, but also delving deeply into the *why and wherefore* of things as well. The Christian university cannot evade the hard questions about what life and the universe mean.” (*First Things*, Eleven Theses of the Christian University).

But why is connecting a biblical worldview with Christian higher education such a matter of significant consequence? What makes this issue of doing our academic work from the vantage point of a coherent Christian vision of the world, or from the perspective of a comprehensive Christian account of reality so important? We can answer this question by using various images or metaphors; and you can pick your favorite:

- Because, horticulturally speaking, a biblical worldview constitutes the *ROOTS* of the Christian college or university.
- Or in *architectural* terms, it establishes the *FOUNDATION* and support of entire edifice of the Christian educational enterprise.
- Or if you prefer *geometric* language, a biblical worldview is the *BASE* and *FRAMEWORK* of the overall academic endeavor from a Christian perspective.
- Or as an *accountant* would put it, it is the *BOTTOM LINE* of the life of a educational institution that seeks to be genuinely Christian.
- Or, finally, as a *philosopher* would have it, a biblical worldview supplies a Christian academic institution with the *FIRST PRINCIPLES AND FUNDAMENTAL PRESUPPOSITIONS* that govern its entire operation.

When it comes to higher education, then, the extent to which it will be seriously and genuinely Christian is totally dependent upon the sum and substance of the biblical vision that underlies it, whether conceived as its roots, its foundation, its base, its bottom line, its presuppositions or its first principles. It is an issue of the highest magnitude, and of the deepest influence. For this reason, it is a matter of genuine and great consequence.

And this relationship between the biblical worldview and Christian higher education is a matter of consequence for so many people! For the *faculty, staff and administrators* who care to pursue their educational callings in the light of their faith. For the *students* who are the relatively naive recipients of whatever form of education they receive through their institution and at the hands of their professors. For the *institution* itself whose ethos and identity and whose methods and purposes are shaped by a particular conception of its Christian underpinnings.

In thinking about this area of institutions and their grounding in a particular worldview and its influence, I have been greatly stimulated by a book by Oxford trained anthropologist Mary Douglas titled *How Institutions Think*. In her work, she asks very provocative questions like these:

- Do institutions think?
- If so, how? Do institutions have minds of their own?
- What thoughts or ideas may occupy such institutional minds?
- How is the thought of individuals affected by institutions?
- How is the thought of institutions affected by individuals?

To answer these questions, she draws upon the thought of sociologist Emile Durkeim and philosopher of science Ludwick Fleck. From these two thinkers, especially the latter, she affirms, among many things, that each institution has its thought collective, its thought style, its thought world, invisible for the most part to its adherents, that leads and trains perception and produces a stock of knowledge that determines what is true and false about reality and a way of life. And though Mary Douglas has criticisms of Durkeim and Fleck's viewpoints, she nonetheless suggests that:

- Institutions are founded on basic images or analogies,
- They confer an identity on adherents,
- They remember and forget,
- They do the classifying, and
- They make life and death decisions.

I have been suggesting to a group of faculty members at my institution (Dallas Baptist University) that we think about these kinds of issues, and have proposed a series of questions that I would like to present to you as well:

- How does ORU as an institution think?
- What ought it to think about? What ought it not think about?
- What is its basic thought style, thought collective, thought world?
- What are its guiding images, analogies, metaphors and symbols?
- What are its basic classifications and categories? Its governing intellectual and spiritual traditions?
- What kind of identity does it confer upon its adherents?
- What does ORU remember and forget?

The answers to these questions are largely, if not entirely, a function of the philosophy of education that underlies ORU—a consequence of the extent to which it has carefully examined its interpretation of the Christian faith and its educational implications, a result of its understanding of the Christian worldview and its applications across the whole spectrum of the academic enterprise.

This matter, then, of relating a biblical worldview to Christian higher education is indeed a matter of consequence, and it is a matter of consequence because of its foundational nature and function, and it is a matter of consequence for faculty, staff, administrators, for students, and for the institution as a whole.

Since this is the case, I want to look more deeply at this matter of a Christian or biblical worldview, and its educational implications. But first some reflections on the meaning of the term 'worldview'.

There have been many helpful definitions of the concept of worldview such as:

- A set of presuppositions of assumptions held consciously or unconsciously about the basic make up of reality (James Sire)
- One's essential belief system, value system, life system or fundamental life principle (Abraham Kuyper, Charles Colson)
- Rock bottom answers to the big questions of human existence
- Comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things (Albert Wolters)

In addition to these definitions, I would like to make the biblical and theological case that what we know as a 'worldview' is a vision of the heart. That how the human heart comprehends life in the world with its own particular set of "eyes" is the nature of a worldview. So first of all let me offer a definition or description of the biblical doctrine of the heart:

I. 'Worldview' as a Vision of the Heart

A. Definition/description of the biblical doctrine of the "heart"

As the image and likeness of God, people are animated subjectively from the core and throughout their being by that primary faculty of thought, affection, and will which the Bible calls the "heart." As Gordon Spykman states, "the *imago Dei* embraces our entire selfhood in all its variegated functions, centered and unified in the heart."² Similarly, Karl Barth affirms that, "the heart is not merely a but *the* reality of man, both wholly of soul and wholly of body."³ The biblical data in both the OT and NT seem to support this conclusion:

² Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 227.

³ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, trans., Harold Knight, J. K. S. Reid, R. H. Fuller (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1960), III/2, p. 436.

B. The biblical data on the doctrine of the “heart”

1. The Old Testament (especially Prov. 27: 19; 4: 23; 2 Sam. 16: 7)

Unquestionably, of all the words that are crucial to biblical anthropology, the word ‘heart’ is by far the most important. The term possesses the nuance of “centrality” since it is used in the Scriptures to refer literally to the inner most part of things. The preponderance of biblical passages, however, speak of the ‘heart’ as the central, defining element of the human person. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word, ‘heart’ (*Leb*, *Lebab*) occurs approximately 855 times where it stands for “all the aspects of a person.”⁴

In OT theology, the heart is comprehensive in its operations as the seat of the intellectual (e.g., Prov. 2: 10a; 14: 33; Dan. 10: 12), affective (e.g., Exod. 4: 14; Psa. 13: 2; Jer. 15: 16), volitional (e.g., Judg. 5: 15; 1 Chron. 29: 18; Prov. 16: 1), and religious life of a human being (e.g., Deut. 6: 5; 2 Chron. 16: 9; Ezek. 6: 9; 14: 3). Because of this ultimate and vital role, to know a person’s heart is to know the actual person. It is the mirror image of a man or woman. As Proverbs 27: 19 puts it, “As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects man.” Since the heart holds the key to one’s essential makeup, its content and condition must be regularly examined. “Watch over your heart with all diligence,” admonishes the sage in Proverbs 4: 23, “for from it flow the springs of life.” Thus, while others may take pride in appearance or look outwardly upon the bodily frame, God knows what constitutes a person’s essential self, and casts his penetrating gaze upon the heart (2 Sam. 16: 7; cf. John 7: 24; 8: 15; 2 Cor. 5: 12).

2. The New Testament (especially Matt. 6: 19-21; Luke 6: 43-45)

The New Testament and the teaching of Jesus advance this perspective. The 150 or so uses of the Greek word ‘heart’ (*kardia*) from Matthew to Revelation demonstrate that it is “the main organ of psychic and spiritual life . . . the one center in man to which God turns, in which the religious life is rooted, which determines moral conduct.”⁵ Indeed, according to various New Testament authors, the heart is the center of human affections (Matt. 22: 37-39; John 14: 1, 27; 2 Cor. 2: 4), the

⁴ *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, s. v., “*Leb*, *Lebab*.”

⁵ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s. v., “*Kardia*.”

source of the spiritual life (Acts 8: 21; Rom. 2: 29; 2 Cor. 3: 3), and the seat of the intellect and the will (Rom. 1: 21; 2 Cor. 9: 7; Heb. 4: 12).

Jesus shares this point of view, teaching that the heart is the spiritual nucleus of the person about which life orbits. He affirms this anthropological reality in the Sermon on the Mount, associating the heart with that unifying faculty and hub of life, stating “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6: 19-21; cf. Luke 12: 33-34). In Jesus’ estimation, once one’s treasure in life is identified, the heart will not be far behind. Jesus also knew that the kind of treasure occupying one’s heart will manifest itself in practical ways through patterns of speech and conduct. He employed a tree metaphor to communicate this point. In fact, he uses both “trees” and “treasures” in several gospel texts, including this one, to illustrate that out of the heart are the issues of life.

For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart (Luke 6: 43-45; cf. Matt. 7: 17-20; 12: 33-35; 15: 18-20; Mark 7: 21-23).

For Jesus, then, in the heart a treasure resides, out of it fruit is produced, and from it words and deeds emerge. He was obviously convinced that the cornerstone of a human being, the very foundation of a human life, is to be found in the heart.

C. Implications of the biblical doctrine of the “heart” on worldview

On the basis of this anthropological perspective presented in the teachings of Jesus as well as the Old and New Testaments, I would like to offer three suggestions regarding a biblical approach to ‘worldview.’

1. A worldview is best understood in biblical terms as a “vision of the heart, that is, “kardi-optically”

The first is that the phenomenon of ‘worldview’ itself must be comprehended in terms of the biblical doctrine of the heart. In other words, the heart of the matter of worldview is that worldview is a matter of the heart. For the heart is the religious, intellectual, affective, and volitional center of a person. Believing, thinking, feeling, and doing all transpire within it. It is concerned with a particular treasure as an

ultimate good. It is the source of how one speaks and lives. It is a reflection of the entire man or woman. It constitutes the springs of life.

Consequently, human existence proceeds “kardiologically” on the basis of a “vision of the heart.” According to the Bible, therefore, I propose that the heart and its content as the center and fundamental impulse of human consciousness creates and constitutes what we commonly refer to as a worldview or *Weltanschauung*.

2. Into the heart go the issues of life in *shaping* a worldview

Second, *into* the heart go the issues of life, thereby shaping a view of life.⁶ Before the springs of life flow *out of* the heart, something must first enter it, and even continue to flow *into it*. The heart not only expresses the life within it, but also receives it from without. Things are internalized *before* they are externalized.

Hence, the sum and substance of the heart’s content and perspective—in short, what I am calling a ‘worldview’—sustains an *interactive or reciprocal* relationship with the external world. Through out life, therefore, the heart not only gives but receives, and *what flows into the heart* from the external world eventually determines *what flows out of it* in the course of life.

3. Out of the heart go the issues of life in *expressing* a worldview

Third, *out of* the heart go the issues of life, expressing a worldview. Once the content of the heart has been established by various experiences and a variety of inputs, the result is a particular perspective on reality, a certain set of dispositions and a distinctive way of life. From a scriptural point of view, therefore, the heart is responsible for how a man or woman, indeed, how even an institution, understands the world and lives within it. What goes into to the heart from the outside eventually shapes its fundamental content, and determines what comes out of it as the springs of life. The heart of this matter of worldview is, indeed, that a worldview is a matter of the heart.

How do you understand and live in the world out of the vision of your heart? How does ORU as a Christian academic institution understand the world and live in it out of the vision of its corporate heart?

⁶ This phrase is from Nicholas Wolterstorff, “On Christian Learning,” in *Stained Glass: Worldviews and Social Science*, Christian Studies Today (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989),73. I have taken his suggestion of an *interactive* relationship of the heart to life and the world as a corrective to Kuyperian expressivism to heart in this paragraph.

Now my proposal at both an individual and institutional level is that the heart vision or worldview of each of us as Christian scholars and of ORU as a Christian university ought to be infused with and shaped by the overall narrative content of Scripture, especially the three themes of creation, fall, and redemption with all of their attendant applications and implications for Christian higher education. I'd like to take a look at each of these foundational themes for the next few minutes.

II. A Biblical Worldview and Christian Higher Education

A. Creation (Gen. 1-2)

Of course, a biblically informed worldview, or vision of the heart must **begin** where the Bible itself begins, in the beginning with the grand narratives of creation in Genesis 1-2. What we want to do is to make the wonderful rediscovery of the world as God's creation!

1. The narratives of creation

a. Chronological account of creation: Genesis 1

Genesis 1 provides for us a basic chronological account of creation. After an opening declaration about God's initial work of creation and its originally unformed and unfilled state in verses 1-2, in the rest of this opening chapter it recounts for us the six days of creation with charming simplicity and amazing symmetry.

Days 1-3 show God at work forming an unformed earth, replacing the primeval darkness with light on the first day, and creating sea and sky, land and vegetation out of the watery chaos in days two and three.

Then, in a perfect parallel, on days 4-6, God fills an empty universe by creating the heavenly bodies of sun, moon, and stars, placing fish and birds in the sea and sky, and making beasts and humanity to live on the land and eat its fruit and vegetation.

b. Anthropological account of creation: Genesis 2

In Genesis 2, we have, in my reckoning, a complementary and supplementary anthropological account of creation that focuses upon:

- The formation of the man from the dust of the ground

- The planting and provision of the garden of Eden where the man is placed as caretaker and preserver
- The prohibition against eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
- The creation of the woman
- The institution of marriage

In this magnificent chapter, man's earthy origins and tasks, his moral and spiritual responsibilities, and the beginnings of human family and community are all on display.

The high point in my mind of these creation narratives comes in Genesis 1: 26-28, a text appropriately designated the creation decree and cultural mandate since it contains God's overall decree for his creation, including the mandate to establish culture and civilization. These three verses contain God's original commission and set forth *in nuce* the entire human project. I take this text to be the theme of the Bible, the topic sentence of Scripture, God's mission statement for humanity and the earth. The basic human questions of who we are, namely the *imago Dei*, and why we are here, specifically to be fruitful and multiply and to have dominion over the earth, are addressed in this magnificent passage which reads as follows:

2. The creation decree: Genesis 1: 26-28 (cf. Psa. 8)

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Gen. 1:27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Gen. 1:28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

3. The original goodness of creation: Genesis 1: 31 (cf. 1 Tim. 4: 1-5)

Three verses later, we have another exceedingly important text that repudiates any Gnostic or Manichean understanding of the material world as somehow evil or inferior. Gen. 1: 31 asserts that when God saw all that he made, he

declared it to be very good. And indeed it was both in its ontological purity and in its existential value for human beings.

Such was the world God made for us to enjoy in Him. He intended us for *shalom*. But what meaning does the doctrine of creation have for Christian higher education and for Christian scholarship? I can think of five implications that I would like to comment on briefly.

4. Implications of the doctrine of creation for Christian higher education and scholarship

a. Objectivity:

The external world designed and created by God contains an inherent, objective and knowable order which is the basis and object of all scientific and scholarly endeavor. In other words, Christian education, teaching, and learning consists of a search for truth which is there to be discovered, not made. We do not construct reality socially, culturally, linguistically, or in any other way as postmodernists propose. Rather, reality has been constructed by God and we receive it and seek to know it in all its wonder and mystery as it has been made and given to us by our Creator.

There is a theological objectivity in the divine nature, a moral objectivity in the divine character, a cosmological, and the world itself is marked by a cosmological, and cosmological objectivity rooted in the divine word, wisdom, and law.

Hence, it is our wisdom to discover the way God has made the universe and designed human life within it, and order our lives accordingly. It is foolishness to consistently and persistently live against the grain of creation will eventually get a splinter (to put it mildly)!

The objective character of creation, therefore, makes science and scholarship possible, and provides all scholars and students with the goal of discovering truth and the possibility of attaining to wisdom!

b. Subjectivity

But God not only made a world to be known, but also made human beings to know the world. In psalm-like terms, metaphysics and epistemology have met together, reality and knowledge have kissed each other. For by God's design, He

made human beings as his image and likeness with a multifaceted cognitive apparatus capable of knowing the true nature of things.

Serious questions have been raised regarding the trustworthiness of the human mind as the product of atheistic evolutionary processes. If nature is all that exists, how can irrational processes produce a mental mechanism capable of trustworthy thinking? It can't. But a logos God can, a God whose nature is characterized by truth and by reason.

The medieval philosophers, Plotinus and Thomas Aquinas in particular, recognized this in their teaching on human epistemological adequacy, called the *adequatio*. They asked: what enables a person to know anything at all about the world or universe about him?

Their answer was this: that for every object that existed—material or immaterial, natural or supernatural—there was a corresponding organ or capacity created by God that enable people to know that object.

There was a correspondence between knowers and their capacities and the things to be known. So not only are reason and the senses adequate for rational and empirical objects, but God has also blessed us with faith, imagination, intuition, empathy, and emotion as cognitive powers as well to know the full scope of created reality as well as the divine.

Hence, another outcome of the doctrine of creation is confidence, scholarly Christian confidence not only that there is a God and a world to be known, but confidence in our God given abilities to know Him and that world.

c. Wholeness

Perhaps the most pernicious problem affecting the Christian church throughout her history, and the most malicious problem thwarting the process of Christian higher education is the perennial human effort to divide what God has made into a whole. This tendency is known as "dualism." We classify reality as sacred or secular, activities as temporal or eternal, the person as body or soul, knowledge as faith or reason, and so on.

But it is only human sin that has fostered this slicing, dicing, and dichotomizing of various aspects of God's very good world that He intended to be conceived in terms of its totality. The Christian scholar must say no to dualism, and yes to a biblically based, God-honoring, liberating and life-inducing wholism. This

wholistic perspective on reality has tremendous ramifications for Christian higher education.

- It frees Christian scholars and students to fully and freely pursue their academic interests in the various things that God and human beings have made without guilt or a sense that what they are doing is somehow contrary to the will of God.
- It opens up possibilities for creative thinking and living in every aspect of life.
- It allows people to see and recognize God in all things, developing what might be called a sacramental perspective on reality.

As sacramental, the entire creation is holy, and the bearer of the divine glory and grace. It reveals spiritual truths and possess sacred meaning. Several biblical texts bear this out.

- Not only are “the heavens telling the glory of God, and the firmament declaring the work of His hands” (Psa. 19: 1), but according to the prophet Isaiah in his vision, “the fullness of the whole earth is His glory” (Isa. 6: 3, marg. reading).
- In the New Testament, St. Paul makes essentially the same point, teaching that God’s invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature for example, can be clearly seen in the things He has made (Rom. 1: 20).

As these texts indicate, the whole cosmos is best perceived in sacramental tones, a concept Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann has explained in these words.

The world, be it in its totality as cosmos, or in its life and becoming as time and history, is an *epiphany* of God, a means of His revelation, presence, and power. In other words, it . . . truly speaks of Him and is in itself an essential means both of knowledge of God and communion with Him, and to be so is its true nature and its ultimate destiny.⁷

This sacramental vision underscores the sense of the holy in all things. It ought to transform the Christian’s approach to thinking and living in the world. In

⁷ Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1963), 120.

education, this perspective imparts a kind of sanctity to the study of all disciplines, seeing in each of them an avenue to God.

d. Unity of truth

The doctrine of creation guarantees another remarkable trait of Christian education: the unity of truth. Contrary to contemporary disciplinary specialization and its resultant fragmentation, knowledge is a unified whole, a seamless robe, and deeply interdisciplinary. All subjects of knowledge hang together and impinge one upon another.

According to John Henry Newman, the basis of this unity is rooted in God. He writes: “All branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator” (*The Idea of a University*).

Newman also believed, and rightly so, that a comprehension of the subjects of knowledge and their mutual relations is the ultimate science and the highest philosophy. Again, he writes: “That only is true enlargement of mind which is the power of viewing many things at once as one whole, of referring them severally to their true place in the universal system, of understanding their respective values, and determining their mutual dependence.”⁸

This joining together of the disciplines into an architectonic whole constitutes the true glory of education as *universitas*—unity in diversity—and infuses within the heart of the student an amazing joy and fulfillment in study and learning. The universe, life, and learning all fit together! Thus, a fourth implication of the doctrine of creation on the task of Christian education is the recognition of the organic unity of truth.

e. Cultural (and educational) mandate

Finally, the doctrine of creation, with its mandate to have dominion over the earth, is the basis for the building of human culture and civilization, obviously tasks at the heart of the educational enterprise. I think Albert Wolters puts it well in his book *Creation Regained* (paraphrased).

The cultural mandate in Gen. 1: 26, 28 provides a sort of climax to the six days of creation. The stage with all its rich variety of props has been set by

⁸ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Rethinking the Western Tradition, ed. Frank M. Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 76, 99.

the stage director, the actors are introduced, and as the curtain rises, they are given their opening cue. The drama of human history is about to begin, and the first and foundational Word of God to his children is the command to fill and subdue.

And as he says else where, the task ahead is civilization, noting that history is the generational unfolding and opening up of the possibilities hidden in the womb of creation, both natural and human. What institution other than the college or university, especially a Christian one, is more well suited to assist in this task of the development, preservation, and transmission of culture? Of the best that can and has been thought, said, and done in human civilization?

For indeed, the cultural mandate implies an education mandate and the education mandate implies a teaching mandate and a teaching mandate implies a student mandate. It almost seems fair to say that in biblical terms, the university, and her tasks of scholarship, studying, teaching, and learning, is rooted and grounded in this original commission and cultural mandate.

Review: Hence, the doctrine of creation is an absolutely indispensable component to a biblical worldview, or vision of the heart grounded in Scripture. And it is very significant in grounding the enterprise of Christian higher education:

1. Objectivity—truth to be known
2. Subjectivity—human capacities to know the truth
3. Wholeness—recognizing the original integrity of creation and saying no to the menace of dualism and the sacred/secular split.
4. Unity of truth—rooted in nature of God and his creative work
5. Cultural mandate—creating a civilization in obedience to God's original commission to the glory of God and the benefit of human beings.

But all is not as it was intended to be; sin happened; peace was disturbed; shalom broken, and death began to reign; and its consequences on the human condition, and on the educational task have been horrific. Let's review the story of the fall and then comment on its effects on Christian educational endeavors.

B. Fall (Genesis 3)

1. The story of the fall: Genesis 3: 1-7 (cf. Rom. 1: 18-32)

In this narrative, the word of God is first questioned and then denied by the serpent, and then it is flagrantly disobeyed by the primeval couple.

2. Consequences of the fall of humanity into sin: Genesis 3: 8-24

- a. Separation/alienation of humanity from God (vv. 8-9)
- b. Separation/alienation of man from himself (vv. 10-11)
- c. Separation/alienation of man from woman (v. 12-13)
- d. Judgment on the serpent (vv. 14-15)
- e. Judgment on the woman (v. 16)
- f. Judgment on the man; separation/alienation from creation; death (vv. 17-19)
- g. Separation or removal from the Garden (vv. 22-24)

3. Implications of the fall on Christian higher education and scholarship

a. Spiritual effects of sin: idolatry

Human beings are inescapably religious beings, even though they have turned away from the true God. They are the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1: 26-27), and even after their defacement due to sin, they still seem to carry about in their consciousness the memory of their essential religious constitution.

This is probably the basis for Calvin's argument that God has not only imparted an "awareness of divinity" (*Divinitatis sensum*) but also implanted the "seed of religion" (*semen religionis*) in the human heart.⁹ Thus, there are no truly *non-religious* or *un-believing* people, personal protestations to the contrary notwithstanding.

The question, therefore, is not *whether* someone is religious or a believer, but rather *how* are they religious and *in what* do they believe? How this fundamental religious instinct is *directed* is the most important fact about a man or a woman individually, and collectively about a culture. The options at the end of the day are only twofold: either the human heart will worship God or an idol, and will cultivate a perspective on life that flows out of the power and illumination of either commitment. The god of one's heart determines the light and direction of one's life.

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 43-44 (§1. 3. 1).

So it is in education, that a faith of some kind, whether biblical or not, will always be integrated with learning. This is a very important point: though some strive for academic objectivity, it is a farce. Scholars cannot separate themselves from themselves and their basic identities and beliefs included. Hence, reason and theorizing will always function within the boundaries of religion (N. Wolterstorff). Faith is an academic non-negotiable. And as a result, all educators and every institution will be enlisted either in service to God or an idol. Educators and institutions are either for or against the Kingdom of God. There is no such thing as a religiously neutral university!

But this is not the only effect of sin on the educational enterprise. It has radically altered the content and capacities of the human mind.

b. Noetic effects of sin: ignorance

Fiddling around with God and the truth is extremely serious business. If we turn to the text of **Romans 1**, we find that Paul offers a **fourfold evaluation** of this process of swapping the biblical God and his truth for a false god and a lie.

His description gets at the noetic effects of sin, that is, the effects of sin on the human mind. First, Paul says that belief systems that replace God and the truth amount to *futile speculations* (Rom. 1: 21b). Second, he asserts that those who promote these new idolatrous perspectives become *darkened in their foolish hearts* (Rom. 1: 21c; cf. Eph. 4: 18). Third, he states that devotees of these new religions and philosophies are deceived since they *profess to be wise but are in fact fools* (Rom. 1: 22). Fourth, Paul states that those who are guilty of the “Great Exchange” are *given over by God* in judgment to moral reprobation, specifically in the forms of impurity (Rom. 1: 24), degrading passions (Rom. 1: 26-27), and a depraved mind (Rom. 1: 28-32).

Sin undoubtedly affects our ability to know God, the self, and the world. Recently, Stephen K. Moroney in an article in Spring 1999 edition of the *Christian Scholars Review*, analyzed the noetic effects of sin on scholarship. *First*, he has argued that sin’s effects are in some sense proportionate to the object of knowledge itself. This is what Emil Brunner called the “law of closeness of relation.” What ever lies closer to the center of reality has been most deeply disturbed by sin. Hence, the impersonal creation has been affected least by sin, especially the formal and symbolic sciences. Next would be human beings, and thus the human and social sciences; and then finally God, especially seen in the disciplinary areas of philosophy and

theology. Sin, then, tends to disturb human thinking about some matters more than others, depending on where that subject matter falls in the hierarchy of being.

Second, sin also affects the knowing subject in at least three ways. First, since our moral and spiritual state affects what and how we think, then one's thinking is influenced by their relationship with God, specifically (a) whether or not that person has been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, and (b) to what degree they are sanctified. Second, how and what people think is also deeply influenced by their corporate and communal affiliations. Sin not only affects the individual but also the group, and thus the vices or virtues of one's community will also be an important factor in determining intellectual processes. For example, a member of a holy order or a flourishing church will have a considerably different cognitive experience than a member of, say, the KKK or Hell's Angels. Third, individual idiosyncrasies and personal characteristics will also influence the noetic consequences of sin. Psychological types, personal habits, political and economic practices, lifestyle choices, and so on also contribute powerfully to one's pattern of thinking.

All of the above factors, then, ought to be considered when contemplating the deep impact of sin on human thinking. First, the object of knowledge under consideration and its ontological status. Second, the spiritual and moral state of the knower. Third, the character of the communities to which the knower belongs. Fourth, the personal habits and traits of the knower as well.

In practical terms, as Arthur Holmes, points out (*Building the Christian Academy*), the noetic effects of sin manifest themselves in—

- Unintentional but real academic mistakes,
- In personal self deception,
- In the faulty exercise of the imagination,
- In misleading language habits (images, metaphors), and finally
- In disrupted relationships with colleagues.

But sin has not only affected us **intellectually**, but also **morally** as well.

c. Moral effects of sin: disordered loves/desires

We need to recognize the important connection between our loves and the moral life. As St. Augustine has pointed out, the vices are the products of our deepest and yet inordinate affections. An excessive love of self, for example, culminates in pride, envy, and anger. A deficient love for the life of the mind and

spirit results in sloth. An inordinate love for things, food and sex expresses itself in avarice, gluttony and lust. Augustine called these misplaced affections “disordered love,” and he knew that disordered love would produce a disordered life. His personal experience, recounted for us in his remarkable *Confessions*, suggests as much.

If E. Michael Jones is correct in arguing that the intellectual life of the thinker is a function of his or her moral and spiritual condition (*Degenerate Moderns*), then the potential damage to careful scholarship by inordinate affections and their resultant vices is rather significant. And certainly the potential of these moral defects for disrupting the tranquillity and orderliness necessary for any productive learning community is significant as well.

Given, then, the spiritual, noetic, moral and other effects of sin on all things human, including education, the whole creation cries out for redemption and the coming of the kingdom of God!

C. Redemption (Gen. 3: 15-Rev. 22: 21)

Here is how the Old Testament sets forth the promises of a coming redemption, and how the New Testament explains the fulfillment and consummation of those redemptive promises.

1. OT promises and covenants in the history of redemption

- a. Protevangelium (Gen. 3: 15): Seed of the woman
- b. Noahic covenant (Gen. 9: 1-17): Race of Shem
- c. Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12, 15, 17): Line of Abraham
- d. Sinai covenant (Exod. 19: 1-6): Nation of Israel
- e. Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7: 1-17): Family of David
- f. New covenant (Jer. 31: 31-33): Person of Jesus Christ

2. NT fulfillment and consummation in the history of redemption

- a. Already: the kingdom/rule of God has come (Matt. 12: 28; Mark 1: 14-15; Luke 17: 20-21; Acts 2: 14-36; 13: 16-41; Col. 1: 13)
- b. Not yet: the kingdom/rule of God is coming (Matt. 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21; 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 20-22)

George E. Ladd, in his book, *A Theology of the New Testament*, has expressed as clearly as anyone the essential thesis of NT theology:

Our central thesis is that the Kingdom of God is the redemptive reign or rule of God dynamically active to establish his rule among men and women, and that this Kingdom rule and authority, which will appear as an apocalyptic act of judgment at the end of the age (the not yet), has already come into human history in the person and mission of Jesus to overcome evil, to deliver people from its power and to bring them into the blessings of God's reign. The Kingdom of God, then, involves two great moments: fulfillment within history already and consummation at the end of history not yet.

But what are the implications of the doctrine of NT redemption on the enterprise of Christian higher education?

3. Implications of redemption on Christian higher education and scholarship

a. Personal/noetic renewal

It is hard not to sound hysterical when considering the amazing consequences of Christian redemption on the Christian believer, including his or her academic and educational endeavors. We need to take more seriously these amazing words from the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 5: 17.

Therefore if any man is in Christ, {he is} a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

As a result of new creation, the object of one's faith shifts from idols to the true God of all creation and redemption. It is possible to know, love, serve, and obey God in all aspects of life, including Christian higher education. The Christian university can and ought to be a thriving community of scholars, teachers, and learners with renewed minds where truth about the whole of life and reality flourishes. The noetic effects of sin are substantially reversed. Faith renews and frees reason, delivers it from error and infuses it with new knowledge, indeed, with true wisdom. The redemption of the human personality results in a transformation of

one's deepest affections, from a disordered love and life, to a reordered love and life.

The power of a rightly ordered love and life has tremendous consequences for reshaping one's intellectual life, and also spawns the kind of learning communities conducive to the discovery and practice of truth. But not only individuals, but the culture needs renewal as well.

b. Cultural restoration (H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*)

- 1.) Christ against culture
- 2.) Christ of culture
- 3.) Christ and culture in paradox or tension
- 4.) Christ above culture
- 5.) Christ the transformer of Culture

Various answers to this question of the relation between these two realms, so central to any Christian conception of life, have been elucidated by H. Richard Niebuhr in his classic book, *Christ and Culture* (1951).¹⁰ Extreme positions either place Christians and culture in a permanent, adversarial relationship (Christ against culture), or exalt the authority of culture over Christ and interpret the sum-total of the faith by it (Christ of culture). More centrist views place Christ and culture in a hierarchical relation (Christ above culture), or set them in tension (Christ and culture in paradox), or defend the role of Christ as the redeemer of culture.

There is truth in each of these positions. At times we need to oppose the culture in its depravity, and at other times to learn from it in its brilliance. As Lord, Christ is certainly supreme over culture, and as residents of two kingdoms (the world's and God's), there will always be tensions in fulfilling our duties as Christians and citizens.

Overall, however, the biblical worldview presented here greatly values human culture, recognizes its pervasive corruption, and calls for its transformation through believers as agents of the Kingdom of God across the whole spectrum of life. Christian students equipped with this perspective can view their education as an

¹⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Row, Publishers, 1951).

opportunity to prepare themselves to become instruments of change in a troubled world.

Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey have emphasized this implication of the Christian worldview in their new book, *How Now Shall We Live?* In the final part of this work, they examine carefully the transforming potential of the Christian vision of the transformed human heart in such areas as family, education, inner city, economics and work, government and politics, science, arts, media, and music. The Christian university, steeped in these principles, can encourage its graduates to do no less in these and other gate-keeping areas in our culture.

So what have we said so far? We have said, first of all, that this matter of relating a Christian worldview to the enterprise of Christian higher education is a matter of great and genuine consequence. And that it is of such importance because it deals with the roots, the foundation, the base, the presuppositions and the first principles of Christian higher education and it has vast implications for lives and work faculty, students, and the institution as a whole. Next, we defined or described a worldview in biblical terms as a vision of the heart in its intellectual, affective, volitional, and religious capacities. And we argued that the hearts of individual Christian educators and of Christian institutions of higher education need to be filled and shaped by the primary themes of Scripture constituting a biblical vision of reality, namely, creation, fall, and redemption.

From *creation*, we learned about an appropriate objectivity and subjectivity in the knowing process, of the wholeness of all things and unity of truth, and that God has ordained a specific cultural purpose for the human race since the beginning of history. From the *fall*, we learned of the catastrophic effects of sin spiritually in the form of idolatry, noetically in the form of ignorance, and morally in the form of disordered loves and lives. From *redemption*, we learned how extensive and profound is the fact that believers are new creations in Christ, resulting in a genuine worship of the true God, of a renewed knowledge of truth, and of a rightly ordered life through rightly ordered loves. Out of this comprehensive redemption flows the possibility of being an agent of cultural transformation and renewal across the whole spectrum of life.

III. Theological Reminders

A. Spiritual warfare: education and scholarship in the context of secularism, technologism, postmodernism, materialism, hedonism

We live in a culture of great lies, of great life-lies including the lies associated with secularism, technologism, postmodernism, materialism and hedonism. This is the social and cultural context in which Christian higher education takes place. We are engaged in a spiritual battle of the greatest magnitude and the highest consequences. Satan and the demons seek to destroy the work of a Christian university based on a biblical worldview.

B. The armor of God and the power of the Holy Spirit: Ephesians 6

Eph. 6:10 ¶ Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Eph. 6:11 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places.} Eph. 6:13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

C. Judgment day: accountable to God for our educational and scholarly choices and lives

Responsibility is the key to human identity, said Vaclav Havel recently. One day we will have to give an account to God for whether or not we have been faithful to our callings as Christian educators, and for the scope, the depth and the integrity, or the lack thereof, with which we have carried them out.

Conclusion:

- **Heavy thinkers!**

You know, I think it is going to take some “heavy thinkers” to pull all of this off. We need professors, administrators and staff who have thought carefully and deeply about the role of the human heart in shaping a view of life, and about creation, fall, and redemption, and their significant educational implications. Indeed, it takes some heavy Christian thinkers who are transformed by their thinking to pull this off. For indeed, you cannot impart to others what you do not possess yourself.

For if process of transformation, of deep abiding change and growth in wisdom and truth, hasn't happened or doesn't happen in us, then it will never happen through us in the lives of our students and in the life of our institution. For you see, the formula is simple: those who wish to kindle others must themselves also burn. So Parker Palmer gets it just right in these words I have provided for you in poster format: "So the transformation of teaching must begin in the transformed heart of the teacher." (*To Know As We Are Known*). Therefore, let us do some heavy Christian thinking about these matters of consequence, for that is exactly what we are concerned with.

- **Matters of consequence**

You know, it has been well said by Thomas Cahill that once upon a time, in the so-called dark ages, the Irish saved civilization by their spiritually inspired and assiduous missional, educational, scholarly and cultural endeavors. Now if Alasdair MacIntyre is correct in suggesting that our own time has witnessed the emergence of a new dark age (which undoubtedly it has), then perhaps with this understanding of the relationship of the biblical worldview to Christian higher education under our belt, perhaps it is our time to return the compliment.

As many have been saying of late, Christian education has the potential of being the cockpit of our culture (Nigel Cameron); that we ought to undertake our tasks as Christian educators with a messianic vision and fervor, that our efforts may be the last and best hope of the American republic. Thank you.

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“A Vision of the Heart—
 A Biblical Worldview and Christian Higher Education”

Introduction:

“The Heavy Thinker”

“Matters of Consequence” —Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

- What is this “matter of consequence”?
- Why is it a “matter of consequence”?
- For whom is it a “matter of consequence”?

I. Worldview as a Vision of the Heart

A. Definition/description of the biblical doctrine of the “heart”

1. Gordon Spykman: “The *imago Dei* embraces our entire selfhood in all its variegated functions, centered and unified in the heart.”
2. Karl Barth: “The heart is not merely *a* but *the* reality of man, both wholly of soul and wholly of body.”

B. The biblical data on the doctrine of the “heart”

1. The Old Testament (especially Prov. 27: 19; 4: 23; 2 Sam. 16: 7)
2. The New Testament (especially Matt. 6: 19-21; Luke 6: 43-45)

C. Implications of the biblical doctrine of the “heart” on worldview

1. A worldview is best understood in biblical terms as a “vision of the heart, that is, “kardi-optically”
2. Into the heart go the issues of life in *shaping* a worldview
3. Out of the heart go the issues of life in *expressing* a worldview

II. A Biblical Worldview and Christian Higher Education

A. Creation (Gen. 1-2)

1. The narratives of creation

a. Chronological account of creation: Genesis 1

b. Anthropological account of creation: Genesis 2

2. The creation decree: Genesis 1: 26-28 (cf. Psa. 8)

Gen. 1:26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." Gen. 1:27 And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Gen. 1:28 And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

3. The original goodness of creation: Genesis 1: 31 (cf. 1 Tim. 4: 1-5)

4. Implications of the doctrine of creation for Christian higher education and scholarship

a. Objectivity

b. Subjectivity

c. Wholeness

d. Unity of truth

e. Cultural (and educational) mandate

B. Fall (Genesis 3)

1. The story of the fall: Genesis 3: 1-7 (cf. Rom. 1: 18-32)

2. Consequences of the fall of humanity into sin: Genesis 3: 8-24

a. Separation/alienation of humanity from God (vv. 8-9)

b. Separation/alienation of man from himself (vv. 10-11)

c. Separation/alienation of man from woman (v. 12-13)

d. Judgment on the serpent (vv. 14-15)

e. Judgment on the woman (v. 16)

f. Judgment on the man; separation/alienation from creation; death (vv. 17-19)

g. Separation from the Garden (vv. 22-24)

3. Implications of the fall on Christian higher education and scholarship

- a. Spiritual effects of sin: idolatry
- b. Noetic effects of sin: ignorance
- c. Moral effects of sin: disordered loves/desires

C. Redemption (Gen. 3: 15-Rev. 22: 21)

1. OT promises and covenants in the history of redemption

- a. Protevangelium (Gen. 3: 15): Seed of the woman
- b. Noahic covenant (Gen. 9: 1-17): Race of Shem
- c. Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 12, 15, 17): Line of Abraham
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- f. New covenant (Jer. 31: 31-33): Person of Jesus Christ

2. NT fulfillment and consummation in the history of redemption

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- b. Not yet: the kingdom/rule of God is coming (Matt. 24-25; Mark 13; Luke 21; 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 20-22)

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B. The armor of God and the power of the Holy Spirit: Ephesians 6

C. Judgment day: accountable to God for our educational and scholarly choices and lives

Conclusion: reprise—

- Heavy thinkers!
- Matters of consequence