

Biblical Christian Education: Liberation for Leadership

by Dr. Glenn R. Martin (1935–2004)

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A critical essay by the late Dr. Glenn R. Martin, one of my mentors in the Faith and friend, who labored for the cause of Christ and His kingdom in the field of higher education for nearly 40 years. During his tenure as the esteemed Professor of History and Political Science at Indiana Wesleyan University, his life and teaching impacted uncountable thousands of students around the globe. After a long battle with cancer, Dr. Martin left this earth for his Kingdom reward on 29 May 2004. In 2006, thanks to the diligence of his long-time secretary, Linda MacKay, and others (including former students and peers), his lectures are being transcribed and put into print. The first installment is entitled *Prevailing WorldViews of Western Society Since 1500*, by Dr. Glenn R. Martin (<http://www.trianglepublishing.com/index.html>). I would recommend that you purchase the IWU Commemorative Edition because it contains 17 lectures (on CD) of his basic “Leadership Series” (given in Australia in 1993). To read Dr. Martin is one thing; to hear him is a gift from heaven. Dr. Martin lived a life submitted to “every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God” and he taught others to do likewise. Dr. Martin’s prophetic words strike at the roots of a “wishy-washy” evangelical world that gives repeated excuses and rationalizations for not obeying the full word of God (and denying His sovereignty thereby). I quote Dr. David Daniel Barkley, “Dr. Martin’s analysis is a valuable starting point for ongoing research, the culmination of his lifelong observations and prayerful insights, and a provocative challenge to scholars who look to the Bible as Truth and subscribe to the Lordship of Christ.” In a very real sense, the purpose of this website is to give honor to the life and legacy of Dr. Glenn R. Martin.



James D. Nickel.

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INTRODUCTION

I wish to thank Dr. Barnes for the invitation to share with you today. Also, I appreciate the Communion that we just enjoyed – the perfect and powerful bond that we have in God on the basis of His finished work in Christ.

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It is my privilege to be counted as your colleague. People, including prospective students, frequently ask me about Indiana Wesleyan University, and without reservation I inform them that Indiana Wesleyan University has a dedicated faculty who take personal interest in their students, strive for excellence in teaching and, above all, love God. It is a joy to have this opportunity to share with you today.

As a colleague, I would like to articulate some of our significant concerns and objectives as a springboard for productive discussion and possibly some decisions. However, I do not pretend to have the latest or final word on the matter before us.

I am speaking from the truth found in Proverbs 9:10: “The love of God is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of God is understanding.” Therefore, if we are to know anything aright, we must first love God; for the love of God is the precondition of the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of God is the precondition of true knowledge of ourselves and all things.

I propose four theses followed by several addenda:

- 1) There is a Biblical Christian World View;
- 2) There is Biblical Christian Education;
- 3) The key to Biblical Christian Education is Biblical Christian Thinking;
- 4) The result of Biblical Christian Thinking is Biblical Christian Reformation.

A BIBLICAL CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW

Basic to an understanding of Biblical Christian Education is, I believe, a Biblical Christian World View. One of the most instructive books on Biblical Christian Education is Dr. Bernard Ramm’s *The Christian College in the Twentieth Century*, in which he stated:

“A university or college is the center of warfare because it is the place where principle confronts principle. Each of the enemies of the truth of God is itself a life system and can only be combated with a life–system. No leveled–out interpretation of Christianity – no matter how orthodox or fundamental – is adequate for the kind of warfare required. Only a consistent world–view or life system of Christianity will do. A Christian university built around a minimal creed is unrealistic in view of the greatness of the battle. Therefore, a Christian university must be founded on a Christian life–system.”

A Biblical Christian World View is simply the recognition that God is Alpha and Omega and that He applies to all of life. During the next few minutes I will set forth in brief a Biblical Christian World View.

Components of a World View

The components of a world view, I suggest, are three. The first two components are the primary questions of God, man, and the cosmos:

- 1) the origin, nature, and destiny of the cosmos, and

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2) the origin, nature, role, and destiny of man.

The third component is:

3) the institutional structure and procedure flowing from the answers given to the primary questions.

To raise and answer the primary questions of God, man, and the cosmos, we must first raise and answer some very basic philosophical questions. These are the simplest of questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Philosophically, they are known as ontology, epistemology, axiology, and teleology. Ontology is the question of being or existence – how do we exist? Epistemology, the question of knowledge – how do we know? Axiology, the question of value – what, if anything, is the ultimate value? And teleology, the question of destiny – where, if anywhere, are we going?

In response to these questions, the Biblical Christian believes that the God of the Bible created all that exists, including man; that man knows ultimately on the basis of God's disclosure of Himself to man in verbal, propositional form – the Bible; that the God of the Bible is the ultimate value, but that man, created in His image, is of infinite, eternal value; and that God and His Kingdom, being in ultimate control, are determinative of direction in time.

The answers given to the philosophical questions will determine the answers given to the primary questions of God, man, and the cosmos. These answers, in turn, determine the institutional structure and procedure in the whole of life, that is, how we live. I have arbitrarily divided life into seven areas:

- 1) Civil Social: corporate relationships including government, marriage, and the family;
- 2) Ecclesiastical: the affairs of the church;
- 3) Education: the means of acquiring knowledge and information, including the media;
- 4) Economics: market relationships;
- 5) Legal: the law order, the cement that holds everything together;
- 6) Aesthetics: the art forms – ranging from the literary arts of literature and history, on the one hand, to the audio visual arts of music, painting, and sculpturing, as examples, on the other hand; and
- 7) International Politics: relations between and/or among civilizations or nations.

A Biblical World View: Presuppositions

The Biblical Christian believes that God – as Creator, Acknowledger, Redeemer, Guide, and coming Lord and King – is the Center. He is the Absolute, the Infinite Reference Point; and thus, all of life should be structured vertically to orient man to God. The Biblical Christian presupposes:

- 1) that God and His Kingdom are spiritual;
- 2) that man is prophet, priest, and king under sovereign God; and
- 3) that no institution should be interposed between God and man.

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1) God and His Kingdom are Spiritual

The first presupposition is that God and His Kingdom are spiritual. The Kingdom of God is simply God's rule. Being spiritual, God and His Kingdom include the totality of existence and cannot be circumscribed by time and space, though God's Kingdom does include time and space. The Kingdom of God is not to be equated with any single institution as, for example, the church, though it most certainly includes the church. Again, God and His Kingdom, being spiritual, include all that is. God and His Kingdom are eternal, perfect, triumphant over Satan, sin, and death, and coming to reign in full power and glory over all that exists. Therefore, every area of life is a place of nearness to and service of and unto God.

2) Man is Prophet, Priest, and King under Sovereign God

The second presupposition is that man is prophet, priest, and king under sovereign God. All men, on the basis of the finished work of God in Christ, have direct access to God. Therefore, the Biblical Christian recognizes the priesthood of all believers. The Biblical Christian also believes that every person, under sovereign God, is a king. God created man and called upon him to exercise dominion over creation. Consequently, man is released to engage in godly exploration, knowledge, and usage of creation. This makes possible scientific endeavor. For the Biblical Christian, science is not to be absolutized and worshiped nor debunked and despised. Rather, it is to be revered as the means by which man, under God, exercises dominion over creation.

Finally, the Biblical Christian believes that every person under sovereign God is a prophet in that God gives man knowledge. (This should not be confused with the gift of prophecy.) Every person can know, truly though not exhaustively, on the basis of God's disclosure of Himself to man in verbal, propositional form – the Bible.

As Biblical Christians we have a wonderful God to celebrate. We celebrate God as Creator. We celebrate God as Acknowledger or Revealer. We celebrate God as Redeemer. We celebrate God as Guide and as coming Lord and King. God is Alpha and Omega. We bow and worship God ontologically as Creator. We bow and worship God epistemologically as Acknowledger. (Indeed, not bowing to God epistemologically is one of the greatest failures of our day – especially in higher education – because God alone is Truth and the source of all that we know ultimately.) We bow and worship God axiologically as Redeemer. And we bow and worship God teleologically as Guide and coming Lord and King.

Therefore, the Biblical Christian always knows what has happened and why, what is happening and why, and what will happen and why – not exhaustively in terms of every detail, but truly – on the basis of the Bible. Because of this, the Biblical Christian is never caught by surprise.

On the other hand, apart from the God of the Bible, relativity is inescapable. This was impressed upon me when I was completing my doctoral work in history. I was troubled that so few people appear to be interested in history. Then I realized that people are not interested in history because history does not

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appear to mean anything to them, and that history does not appear to mean anything to them because it does not mean anything to them.

I became aware that the reason for this is that the history to which recent generations have been exposed has been written, for the most part, by naturalist historians. Naturalist historians, given their presuppositions, necessarily begin and end in the middle of nowhere. They presuppose that what is now has always been. Thus, what is now is “normal.” But, unhappily, the more closely they examine “normality,” the more “normality” is discovered to be abnormal. Therefore, it becomes incumbent upon naturalist historians to construct some scheme to help man overcome the abnormal normal.

The Biblical Christian does not find himself in this dilemma. He knows that in order to understand history or time, it is necessary to understand pre–history or pre–time. Time has not always existed: “In the beginning God...” It was God plus zero. God is uncreated; and God created. Consequently, time is the created economy of God, and His creation was perfect.

The Biblical Christian also knows that subsequent to creation there was a Fall; and on this side of the Fall there is abnormality, not normality. But Biblical Christians are not caught in a flux of perpetual abnormality; they know that what currently exists has not always been and will not always be. Biblical Christians know that God in Christ will return to consummate history and implement the Kingdom of God in its full power over all that exists. Hence, they look forward in hope to the Second Advent even as they look back in faith to the First Advent.

3) No Institutional Interposition between God and Man

The third presupposition of Biblical Christianity is that no institution should be interposed between God and man. God in Christ is the only mediator between God and man. Therefore, any institutional intervention between God and man is a pretension to deity and is inadmissible.

A Biblical World View: A Holy Commonwealth

The Biblical Christian believes in a Holy Commonwealth – the recognition that God is over all of life, no area excepted. God is sovereign; He is the final authority. There is no power higher than God. If God is sovereign He is over all of life, and no part can be separated from His reign. In the triune God of Biblical Christianity, and only in Him, there is unity in the midst of apparent diversity; for the Biblical Christian there is no dichotomy or false division. For example, there is no dichotomy of sacred and secular, the view that God is over part of life which is therefore sacred but not over the rest of life which is secular. Hence, when the term “secular” is used ontologically, the war is lost before the battle is begun; God is sovereign, He is over all of life.

Given the sovereignty of God, the ultimate question for the Biblical Christian is always the question of reverence. We are reverent or irreverent in every area of life; that is, we are either in proper relationship

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with God or in improper relationship with God. On the other hand, if we abandon the God of the Bible as absolute, we will substitute something for God, and that which is substituted for God will necessarily be relative. (Obviously, you will not accept my substitute as absolute and I will not accept yours.) Given universal relativity, the ultimate question is necessarily the question of relevance; everything is relevant or irrelevant, not reverent or irreverent.

The Biblical Christian also believes that man is depraved. This does not mean that man is inconsequential, insignificant, irresponsible, or that man is programmed, determined, predetermined, or predestined. Depravity means that man – starting from himself by taking thought and action individually or collectively – cannot deliver himself from the dilemma into which he was born. He is dependent upon the work and will of God for his deliverance.

Thus, as Biblical Christians, we are simultaneously pessimistic and optimistic. We are pessimistic concerning man as man. Man is fallen. He is in rebellion against God, purporting even to be God. Therefore, evil will compound. But we are optimistic because of the good news of the finished work of God in Christ. God in Christ has conquered Satan, sin, and death whereby we may be reconciled to God. As reconciled, we are transformed; and, as transformed, we become reforming powers and influences.

The Kingdom of God is Eternal; it has always been, is now, and will always be. The Kingdom of God does not have reference to the future alone. As reconciled to God in Christ, Christians become reforming powers in this age – even salt and light. Without salt there is no preservation of life, and without light there is only darkness and hence no life. It does not take much salt to preserve life nor much light to dispel the darkness.

Having an accomplished victory to proclaim, Biblical Christians are not only concerned with the future but also with this age. Others can only find hope in the future. Whenever a civilization is disintegrating, as the modern West most certainly is, there is understandably intense preoccupation with the future and futurology. I have two shelves of books in my office on futurology; there is even a book entitled, *The Future of the Future*. Unlike others, the Biblical Christian, through the finished work of God in Christ and the leadership of God the Spirit, becomes salt and light, a reforming power and influence in this age.

A Biblical World View: Institutional Structure and Procedure

Briefly stated, what is the institutional structure and procedure flowing from Biblical Christianity?

- 1) In the area of the church, the Biblical Christian recognizes that the function of the church is three-fold: to point all men to God in Christ, to bind the redeemed together in Christ – the Body of Believers, and to make known that God is Lord over all of life.
- 2) In the area of law, it is first necessary to define law. What is law? To every basic question (e.g., What is love, truth, justice, beauty, law?) Biblical Christians respond with the inversion: God is. God is the “I AM.”

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God is love. God is truth. God is justice. God is beauty. God is law. Christians know that in God we live and move and have our being and, therefore, God is the cement that holds everything together. Accordingly, for the Biblical Christian, all law is based on the Bible or principles derived there from.

3) In the civil–social area, the Biblical Christian believes that government is a gift of God for the orderly procedure of man in a fallen world. The Biblical Christian recognizes the separation of offices and institutions as, for example, church and state, but does not believe in a dichotomistic separation of institutions in terms of sacred and secular because all of life is under God. Therefore, government is of God, by God, for man. Thus, the Biblical Christian neither worships government, which leads to authoritarianism and totalitarianism, nor debunks and despises government, which leads to anarchy. Rather, the Biblical Christian reverences government as a gift of God for the orderly procedure of man in a fallen world.

4) In the area of the arts, the Biblical Christian believes that there is much beauty. God is ultimate beauty, and art has to do with beauty. Accordingly, Biblical Christians are in the forefront in the arts having been liberated to sing, to write, and to paint about the beauty which God is and which surrounds us because of God’s creation, including man. Creation, though fallen, is still creation and man, though fallen, is still man.

5) Finally, in the area of economics, the Biblical Christian believes in and practices private property and freedom of enterprise with important Biblical qualifications. The Biblical Christian believes in private property, not in the sense of individualism, that is, “What is mine is absolutely mine,” but rather in the sense of private possession. One of the Ten Commandments is, “Thou shalt not steal;” the presupposition is that one cannot steal that which is not possessable. The Biblical Christian recognizes that every person under God is a steward and is accountable to God for the time, energy, gifts, and possessions which God has given him.

Freedom of enterprise is also Biblically qualified in terms of justice in prices and wages. The market is the basic mechanism for determining prices and wages; but the market, like everything else created by God, is not to be absolutized. The market needs to be tempered with justice. What is a just price and a just wage? It is a price asked by a seller and paid by a buyer, or a wage paid by an employer and asked by an employee in clear conscience with a quiet heart before God.

For the Biblical Christian work is a form of worship. Every person, without exception, is created by God for a particular purpose and therefore, as worship, all work is of and unto God. It follows that the expression “full–time Christian service” is meaningless to the Biblical Christian as this implies that there must be part–time Christian service. The Biblical Christian believes that those who are unable to work are the responsibility of the Christian community.

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BIBLICAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Biblical Christian Education not only flows out of a Biblical Christian World View, but, in turn, perpetuates a Biblical World View. In education, the Biblical Christian assumes a working knowledge of the rudiments of reading, writing and ciphering (or figuring). Presupposing that ultimate knowledge is known on the basis of God's disclosure of Himself in verbal propositional form – the Bible – the Biblical Christian must know how to read, write, and cipher. Therefore, historically, Biblical Christians have been in the forefront of mastering the rudiments as a means to the end of knowing God.

Given the rudiments, the Biblical Christian has a three-fold objective in education. The first objective is to know God as applicable to all of life, that is, to know the Biblical Christian World View. Biblical Christian Education necessarily begins with creation and the dominion mandate. God created man and called upon him, as has been noted, to exercise dominion over creation. Accordingly – in addition to redemption – the ontological and the epistemological areas are of primary concern in Biblical Christian Education. The Christian's mandate in education is to bring all of life into captivity unto God as Alpha and Omega.

The second objective in Biblical Christian Education is to know all other world views fully and fairly. Nothing can be known in a vacuum; that is, we cannot know what we believe and why if we do not simultaneously know what we do not believe and why. It is not possible to know the Biblical Christian World View without knowing the world views antithetical to Biblical Christianity.

Thirdly, in Biblical Christian Education it is proposed to reinterpret everything on the basis of Biblical presuppositions and the Biblical World View. This is a demanding responsibility. Biblical Christian Education and scholarship is second to none – it requires mastery of the rudiments; recognition that God is applicable to all of life; full and fair knowledge of all other world views; and reinterpretation of everything on the basis of Biblical presuppositions. Biblical Christians must always reinterpret; they need to reinterpret with special diligence in an increasingly post Christian West and world.

The Puritans in America, as practitioners of Biblical Christian Education, produced a rigorous scholarship. Acknowledging this scholarship, Perry Miller – the brilliant, agnostic, intellectual historian of Harvard University and a foremost student of the Puritans – commended the Puritans:

“... most historians cannot understand the Puritans because they [that is, the historians] cannot stand the pace.”

As Dr. Ramm recognized, Biblical Christian Education is a vital calling, making possible reinterpetive criticism toward the reformation and perpetuation of culture:

“Only a life view built on Christian revelation can avoid the vanity and superficiality which plagues all purely human systems. Christian colleges today are called to the same role. We, too, must be critics of our own culture and our own educational world. Our criticism of our culture must never be cheap,

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never artificial, never naive, but we must be critical. If we are not critical, we remain pagan in our mentalities even though we may teach in a Christian school and affiliate with a Christian church. We cannot overlook the possible manifestations of man's wickedness in every subject of the arts and sciences. If professors in Christian colleges are to be true to its charter, they must engage in such competent culture criticism. Revelation is given, not only to shed light upon the way, but to give us perspective from which we may interpret and criticize."

BIBLICAL CHRISTIAN THINKING

The key to Biblical Christian Education is Biblical Christian thinking, sometimes called presuppositional thinking. Biblical Christian thinking is the recognition that, because God is Alpha and Omega, everything other than God is relative. God alone is absolute and changeless. Therefore, nothing can be understood ultimately except in relationship with God. Accordingly, in Romans 12:2 we are instructed not to be conformed to this age, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds that, thinking the thoughts of God after Him, we may implement the good, acceptable, and perfect will and way of God. Dr. Ramm observed that:

"All thinking is from presuppositions. There can be no thinking without presuppositions, and therefore, all respectable thinking is from sound presuppositions. Any quote 'neutrality' in science, philosophy or religion is fictional. The only respectable procedure is to admit that one thinks from presuppositions and to choose those presuppositions in a responsible manner."

The Necessity of Presuppositions

I will spend a few minutes on Biblical Christian thinking because it is of paramount importance. Biblical Christian thinking is the recognition that man is not God. For the Biblical Christian God has no beginning. God is uncreated. It was God plus zero. But man has a beginning. Man is created. Therefore, all human conclusions – there is no exception – necessarily flow from what the man in the street would call a basic assumption; the philosopher, an arbitrary given; the scientist, an indemonstrable axiom; or, more generally, a presupposition. This is the recognition that everyone lives ultimately on the basis of faith.

One dichotomy produced by the rationalist mind was that of "faith vs. reason." This dichotomy, frequently encountered today, leads to the conclusion that everybody lives either on the basis of faith or on the basis of reason. Those who live on the basis of faith are presumably not exercising any reason, opting for a mysticism. Conversely, those who live on the basis of reason are presumably not exercising any faith. But for the Biblical Christian it is never "faith vs. reason;" it is faith in "x" vs. faith in "y" vs. faith in "z."

Choosing a Starting Point

In the final analysis, it appears that there are only two possibilities – either to live on the basis of what we presuppose to be the revelation of the God presupposed to be there or to live on the basis of what we know to be the conclusions of men who were or are here. Let me repeat this conclusion because it is most basic: I believe that every person ultimately lives either on the basis of faith in what is presupposed to be the revelation of the God presupposed to be there or what is known to be the conclusions of men who

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were or are here.

I propose to examine these two possibilities. Considering the first possibility, it is apparent that man must presuppose God, as man cannot prove the existence of God. If man could prove God, man would be God. The created cannot prove the Creator. The finite cannot prove the Infinite. Nor is it possible for man to prove that the Bible is the revelation of the God presupposed to be there.

What is the alternative to presupposing that God does exist and that He has disclosed of Himself to man whereby man may know? It is to exercise faith in the conclusions of men who were or are here. Upon careful examination, it is apparent that the only thing certain about the conclusions of men is that there is nothing certain about them. What was “truth” yesterday is no longer “truth” today, and presumably, “truth” today will not be “truth” tomorrow. For example, the day before yesterday it was Aristotelian physics, yesterday Newtonian physics, today Einsteinian physics, tomorrow some other physics. This is true in every area of life and every discipline of study.

Therefore, starting from man, relativity is inescapable. The Biblical Christian understands that man cannot self generate absolutes. Starting with that which is finite and projecting it as far as he will, man can never arrive at an infinite reference point.

The Biblical Christian can go further; he does not find himself caught in a quagmire of relativity. By thinking Biblically, the Christian knows that it is possible to presuppose a relativity or an absolutivity (that God exists and that He has disclosed of Himself to man whereby man may know). Moreover, the Biblical Christian can go beyond relativity to a personal knowledge of absolutivity. On the authority of Biblical revelation, it is possible for us as Christians to know that the Spirit of God, on the basis of God’s finished work in Christ, bears witness with our spirit that we are the very children of God. That is, it is possible to know personally the work of God in Christ on the basis of the witness of the Spirit of God with our spirit.

Thinking Biblically, we can ask the question, “Does a given system both raise and answer the basic questions and does it do so in a manner which can be lived?” I believe that Biblical Christianity is the only system that both raises and answers the basic questions in a manner which can be lived. All other systems, because they can only provide “answers” which cannot be lived, are necessarily abstractions or ideologies.

Escaping the Quagmire of Relativity

Given presuppositional thinking, it is obvious that much argumentation is a waste of time. When I meet someone with whom I disagree presuppositionally, the only possibility is to agree to disagree. Hence, Christians are not called to become polemicists but are called to be witnesses. No one can be argued into the Kingdom of God. In this regard, a student of mine raised a very astute question, “Is not Biblical Christian thinking a presupposition?” My response was, “Thank you.” In other words, as finite creatures we cannot escape the reality that every human conclusion is necessarily based on some starting point.

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Biblical Christian thinking – and this is the point I am really trying to make – allows us to escape absolutizing anything which is relative and, conversely, to escape relativizing that which is absolute. This is most significant because only through Biblical Christian thinking is it possible to escape absolutizing anything created, including the spirit of the age or *zeitgeist*, the prevailing world view or *weltanschauung*, the nation in which we live, our culture, our church, our theological system, or even our discipline of study.

As educators we are prone to absolutize our discipline of study. I advise my students that to become Biblical Christian scholars it is necessary for them to “rise above” their discipline of study. Biblical Christians know that a discipline of study is only a slice of the totality of life, and that life itself is not absolute. However, every discipline is very important and on this I know we would all agree.

Liberation for Leadership

On the basis of Biblical Christian thinking we can truly become leaders. Have you ever asked the question, “What is wrong with the book I am reading, the lecture I am hearing, the production or performance I am viewing?” To answer this question, another question must be raised: “What is the writer, the speaker, the producer or performer basing everything on?” Writing, speaking, producing, or performing based on anything other than God as Alpha and Omega cannot be absolutely true. It is liberating to know this. In other words, reading is not knowing, hearing is not understanding, seeing is not believing: what we read, hear, or view is determined by the presuppositions of the writer, speaker, producer, or performer. Christians need to learn to read, to listen, to view, and to think Biblically, or presuppositionally, beginning and ending with God.

Accordingly, as Biblical Christians, we can be exposed to anything written, spoken, produced, or performed without being influenced thereby. We may choose not to read, hear, or view certain things, but by thinking Biblically we can read anything, listen to anything, or view anything without being influenced. When we read, listen, or view presuppositionally, knowing our presuppositions and conclusions, we are able to recognize immediately the presuppositions and conclusions antithetical to our own. Knowing what we believe and why in contrast with what we do not believe and why liberates us for leadership. If we do not practice presuppositional thinking, we will, if only inadvertently, be influenced or led by those who do.

Failure to practice Biblical Christian thinking renders Christians vulnerable to two temptations. One is withdrawal from the world. Not knowing how to handle that which is hostile to Christianity, Christians will be tempted to withdraw. Hence, Christians tend to abandon the arts and to abandon politics and other areas of life. Ultimately the only “safe” institution for Christians is the church, and, accordingly, Christianity is reduced to “churchianity.” However, this is not Biblical; Christians are instructed to be in the world though not of the world.

The other temptation is to hate those who operate from a presuppositional base antithetical to Biblical Christianity. We are instructed by God, not only to love one another, but also to love our enemies. How is it possible to love our enemies? Christians who practice Biblical Christian thinking can truly be charitable.

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By thinking Biblically, Christians can always differentiate between a person and the person's presuppositions and behavior. For example, Christians can love the Communist while hating Communism. Hence, Christians are liberated unto a Reformation of Love: "Where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty;" "You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free."

BIBLICAL CHRISTIAN REFORMATION

Biblical Christian Education leads to Biblical Christian Reformation. Through Biblical Christian Education all of life is brought into captivity unto God. Having been transformed, Christians become reforming powers and influences in the totality of life.

The result is not perfection. Biblical Christians recognize that there will not be perfection until the return of God in Christ and the institution of God's Kingdom in full power over all that exists. But Biblical Christians, as reforming powers and influences, will make a substantial difference in this age, producing relative order, relative community, relative liberty, relative justice, relative charity, and relative productive activity. Conversely, failure to begin and end with God results in disorder, discord, oppression, injustice, hatred, destruction, and death.

(ADDENDA)

During the next few minutes I propose to share a few addenda including: Blessings and Benefits which flow from Biblical Christian Education, Impediments to Biblical Christian Education, and Practices of Biblical Christian Education. As there is not time to elaborate, I will only mention these addenda in passing.

BLESSINGS OF BIBLICAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Liberating Students for Leadership

I would like to begin with some qualifications and clarifications. First, I wish to emphasize that I do not have the final word on the Biblical Christian World View. Moreover, the Biblical Christian World View is not to be absolutized. In this regard, while I was lecturing in Hawaii a student asked a most penetrating question: "In the final analysis, what is your opinion of the Biblical Christian World View?" My response was this: "God in Christ did not come to live, to die, and to be raised again for the Biblical Christian World View, but for you and for me personally." Nevertheless, there is a Biblical Christian World View because God does apply to all of life, and we can know God truly, though not exhaustively, in His applicability to all of life.

Secondly – and I say this emphatically – Biblical Christian Education does not propose to force students into a preset mold or box. Indeed, the very opposite is the case. Only on the basis of a Biblical Christian World View and Biblical Christian thinking can students escape absolutizing that which is relative. Having been liberated, students can exercise Biblical Christian charity.

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In other words, we are not trying to marshal students to line up with our conclusions. We strive to make it possible for students to come to know the Dominion of God which can liberate them to reinterpret and become reforming powers and influences themselves. If we try to compel students to agree with our conclusions, we have accomplished nothing; as soon as they walk out of our classroom and into the next classroom, they will simply agree with what is being taught there. Instead, we desire that they be liberated unto God and become His reforming powers and influences.

I will never forget a student who enrolled in my course late. The student, a resident of Marion, had been involved in an automobile accident and had decided to remain in Marion until he recovered. He had been attending a university recognized as a prestigious institution. As he came to be exposed to interpretation and then reinterpretation on the basis of Biblical presuppositions, he became very hostile. He was allowed to express his hostility openly. I did not combat him; I tried to bring him back every time to presuppositions. What were his presuppositions and what were alternative presuppositions?

Gradually, during the semester, his attitude changed and he showed increasing interest in Biblical Christianity. Finally, in my office at the end of the course, I had the privilege of leading that young man to God in Christ. Then he paid me one of the greatest compliments I have received from any student. He said, "I want you to know something. I have been in a number of classes where the professors were well known and highly regarded, but I was freer to express myself in your class than in any other class I have attended." I praised God. We are truly liberated. And we need to liberate our students.

A Charitable Community

Moreover, I would suggest that, as Biblical Christian educators, we need to exercise charity with one another and with our students. We need to emphasize the ninety percent on which we agree and overlook the ten percent on which we disagree. We are never going to agree completely. We need to focus on that ninety percent. For too long Christians have been fighting one another rather than expending their energy in the larger warfare in which they are engaged.

I believe this very strongly. Accordingly, when students speak encouragingly of another professor, I join in the commendation. However, if a student speaks disparagingly of a colleague, I do not enter into the conversation, but instead ask the student, "Have you talked personally with that professor?" Or, if a student asks in a deprecating manner, "Have you heard what professor so-and-so said, or what he teaches," I reply that I am not interested. This is a practice I have followed quite consistently, though not perfectly.

As Biblical Christian educators we need to exercise charity. We need not only to love our enemies, but also to love one another. The mark of a true Christian is: "Behold, how they love one another," and by thinking Biblically we can be charitable. Only Christian rationalism leads us to the position that everyone must line up with our conclusions. When we start with God as Alpha and Omega, we cannot fall into such pettiness and can truly become charitable and humble.

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Superior Scholarship

One of the blessings and benefits which flow from Biblical Christian Education will be a superior scholarship resulting in productive activity. An institution committed to Biblical Christian Education will attract committed and thoughtful students.

Biblical Christian Education will also produce leaders, that is, people who know what they believe and why in contrast with what they do not believe and why. We often mistakenly think of leaders as people who occupy positions deemed to be influential and powerful. But, for the most part, and I speak disrespectfully of no one, these people are not leaders. Rather – symbolizing the loci of power gathered around those few people who know what they believe and why as over against what they do not believe and why – these people are simply trying to put into practice that which they have been taught. On the other hand, Biblical Christian Education is productive of true leadership.

A Biblical Christian institution of higher education consists of a community of Christian scholars who combine the intellectual content of Biblical Christianity with the experiential commitment to Christianity. An intellectual content without an experiential commitment will lead to an immobilizing scholasticism. On the other hand, an experiential faith without an intellectual content will lead to an impotent mysticism. We must combine the two in a dynamic life–changing, nation–changing, and world–changing relationship. I will always remember a devotional given by Dr. Blackburn – some of you may remember it as well – in which he said that we must integrate not only faith and learning, but also faith and living. We are the community of the redeemed. Reformation begins with us.

IMPEDIMENTS TO BIBLICAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

An Age of Fragmentation

Finally, I would like to share several reasons why Biblical Christian Education is so little practiced. First, Biblical Christian Education is little practiced because there is not a wholistic approach to life in the general culture, and this is particularly evident in higher education. Universities have degenerated into multiversities. They have become perpetual intellectual smorgasbords through which students pass picking up bits and pieces with little or no attempt to relate the parts to the whole. We have substituted the worm’s–eye for the bird’s–eye view or the micro for the macro approach to life. If there is only fragmentation, there can be no Biblical Christian Education and World View.

An Anthropological Thought Form

Secondly, in Western–American civilization, we no longer think theologically, but anthropologically. We need to know this in order to understand the conflict in which we are engaged. Unhappily, the anthropological thought form encompasses the Christian community as well as the non–Christian inasmuch as Christians are also highly influenced by the spirit of the age. Dr. Ramm observed:

“Christianity has always been in conflict. The conflict is raging and will rage. It is ultimately a conflict of two principles, an anthropocentric or a theocentric, the word of man or the Word of God, human

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wisdom or divine revelation. The conflict rages in the university and the Christian educator ought not to ignore it or to play it down or to attempt to circumvent it. The anthropocentric principle must be met head-on with the Biblical Christian principle. Nothing short of a comprehensive Biblical Christianity will do. It is no use trying to save the upper story if the first floor is on fire. Therefore the Christian university must be built on a powerful Christian life system, a coherent, comprehensive, and consistent world view.”

I believe that the basic question is this: Am I who I am because of who God is or is God who He is because of who I am? The starting point is always the key. A glib song in the world of entertainment suggests: ‘It is not where you start, but where you finish.’ Nothing could be further from the truth ontologically because ontologically it is impossible to finish other than where one starts. Today, even in Christian higher education, we have shifted from thinking theologically – we do not begin or end with God – to thinking anthropologically. We begin with man and end with man. Our thoughts rarely rise above the line of anthropology.

The Rootlessness of Relativity

Another reason for the failure to practice Biblical Christian Education is the lack of belief in absolutes, with a resulting relativism. I will never forget a brilliant lady with whom I was conversing two years ago in flight to Johannesburg. She was taking her two sons to Africa for a vacation. When she asked why I was going to Africa, I told her that I lecture on the Biblical Christian World View and its antitheses. She asked about the Biblical World View and that launched us into lengthy discussion.

In our conversation I discovered that she traveled in significant intellectual circles in New York City and was acquainted with some scholars whom I had read but had never met. It was a rather delightful conversation. But as time went on she stated, “You people need a crutch. You need to believe in an absolute.” In so many words she said, “We have graduated from absolutivity. We do not need such a crutch. There are no absolutes. I have learned to relax.”

At that point I stopped discussing with her and began witnessing. I reminded her that every person without exception, in his or her quiet moments – whether through the loss of a loved one, loss of health, loss of position – is confronted with the basic questions of life: “Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?” Additionally, I observed that the rate of suicide is the highest among so-called student intellectuals who are wrestling with these questions. I shared with her the finished work of God in Christ; that God is Alpha and Omega; that He created us; that He has acknowledged Himself to us; that He has provided for our redemption; and that He guides us and will come again for us.

I will never forget her response. I had bared my soul. I had other things I needed to do and was ready to conclude the conversation. She said, “I am going to check on my two sons and when I return I want to continue this conversation.” It was apparent that relativism was not absolutely satisfactory!

We live in a world in which there is no longer any significant belief in an absolute. Given relativity, we can

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only proceed on the basis of utilitarianism and pragmatism with a resulting manipulation – both philosophically and procedurally. We lack a large faith and vision, a reason for living, and a reason for dying.

THE PRACTICE OF BIBLICAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Applicability of God to All of Life

I would like to relate the nature of my commitment to Biblical Christianity and Biblical Christian Education. I graduated from an Evangelical Christian College and regard my alma mater very highly. I received an excellent education, but it was not a Biblical Christian education. I went on to graduate school and was an excellent student (this is not said boastfully, but as a matter of explanation). For the first time, I was confronted with those who knew what they believed and why, or so they thought, and were strongly opposed to Christianity. As I came under their influence, I reached a critical point in my life. They taught that the only way to be a Christian was either to have a second rate mind or to turn the mind off and settle for a hopeless mysticism. Because I was unwilling to accept either of these possibilities, I came to a crisis in my life.

(Parenthetically, I have observed that a number of Evangelical Christian College graduates renounce Christianity during their graduate studies. I respect these people, not because they renounce their faith, but because they are consistent with the presuppositions which they have been taught and have come to embrace.)

My crisis was that I had to renounce Christianity as a myth or a cruel hoax in order to be consistent with what I was being taught and was coming to accept, or I had to rethink the whole of life. By the grace of God and the prayers of a devout mother, I did the latter. I went through five years of agonizing search during which I read extensively seeking answers. (This was before C.S. Lewis – who did much reinterpretive spadework – was being widely read in the United States, and it was before there was written work from apologists such as Francis Schaeffer.)

Finally, God brought me to an understanding of what I call the Biblical Christian World View: that God applies to all of life; that He is Alpha and Omega; and that everything can be understood ultimately only in relationship with Him. It became apparent that the key is Biblical Christian thinking. I came to the recognition that, rather than turn the mind off to be a Christian, it is necessary to turn the mind off to be anything but a Christian. This is because a non-Christian must necessarily and inescapably absolutize that which is relative, even if only relativity itself.

My experience makes clear that a major problem in Christian higher education is the failure on the part of Christians to recognize that God does apply to all of life. In Christendom we have not returned to the basic questions. If we are to have a significant influence in an increasingly post Christian West and world, we must raise and answer the basic questions.

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A Bibliocentric Curriculum

Finally, I believe that the failure to know the Bible and take it seriously is a very critical problem. The Bible is not the center of the Evangelical Christian university curriculum. We do require students to take “x” number of hours of Bible. But is the Bible the center of curriculum? That is, is God as we understand Him in verbal, propositional form the center – that to which everything is ultimately related and understood? Or is the Bible merely a part of the curriculum and increasingly a lesser part of the curriculum? This is a question with which we must come to grips if we are to have Biblical Christian Education. Dr. Ramm had some instructive words on this subject:

“It is difficult to keep great minds interested in small problems. If small men interpret the Christian faith in a small way, then great men will lose interest in it.”

(May I add something parenthetically at this point which I believe is very critical. I used to be plagued by the following question: “If Christianity is true, why does it appear to have such limited appeal to so-called intellectuals, those persons considered to be the most gifted or thoughtful?” This question troubled me deeply because it appeared that in order to be a Christian a person did, indeed, have to have a second rate mind or be willing to settle for mysticism.

Then the reason for the limited appeal of Christianity to intellectuals in recent generations struck me forcefully. It is because intellectuals have rarely been confronted with Biblical Christianity. Intellectuals are wrestling with the basic questions in an attempt to find answers which apply to all of life. Unhappily, instead of being confronted with Biblical Christianity, they have been exposed to an experiential Christian faith which they consider to be just another form of mysticism. Without question, the experiential faith is very good as far as it goes, but it must be combined with the intellectual content of Biblical Christianity.)

Ramm’s instructive words on the critical need for the centrality of the Bible in the Evangelical Christian university curriculum continue as follows:

“In no place is it more important to maintain a great interpretation of the Christian faith than in a Christian university. If a faculty member thinks that Christian revelation is not really commensurate with the greatness of God, then he will lose interest in Christianity and give it only nominal assent to keep the academic peace. And if the student is given a small interpretation of the Christian faith, he will lose interest in Christianity and consider it irrelevant to much of life.”

Of all the Christian scholars who have ever lived, none has excelled Augustine in seeing the greatness and majesty of Christian revelation. What Augustine said of the oracles of God he could have said of all of the great truths of Christian revelation:

“Wonderful is the depth of Thy oracles, whose surface is before us, inviting the little ones; and yet wonderful is the depth, O my God, wonderful is the depth. It is awe to look into it; an awe of honor, and a tremble of love.”

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One of the probable difficulties in the inner life of a Christian college is that some professors may have a large view of their specialty and a small view of the Christian faith. Consequently, their attitude toward Christian revelation is one of condescension: it is a distinct favor to Christianity that they give it some credence. Augustine would not tolerate this for a moment. He would demand that every professor study his Christianity with the same scholarly thoroughness he employed in learning his specialty. Only as one learns Christian revelation in some depth can he properly correlate his own specialty with the perspectives of Christian revelation.

Such a powerful quest for truth and grasp of it is fundamental to Christian higher education. If the truth of the liberal arts looks big and the truth of Christian revelation looks small, it will not be long before the Christian revelation loses its hold on the faculty and the student body. Certainly the way is not easy. It demands ability and commitment in administration and faculty.

Toward Biblical Christian Leadership

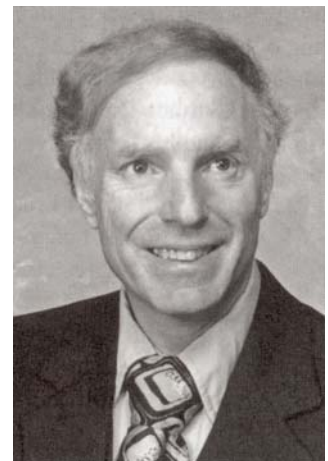
Dare I be so foolish, or so bold, as to make suggestions? “Fools rush in...,” as it were, but I will, nevertheless, make several suggestions in conclusion. I suggest:

- 1) that all students be introduced to a Biblical Christian World View, major alternative world views, and Biblical Christian thinking and reinterpretation during their first three semesters as part of their General Education.
- 2) that academic majors be exposed to the Biblical Christian and antithetical views of their discipline both in their gateway course and again, as review, in their capstone course or seminar.
- 3) that all seniors review a Biblical Christian World View, alternative world views, and Biblical Christian thinking and reinterpretation in a General Education capstone course or seminar.

The proposal for majors could be incorporated into existing courses. The two General Education courses could be one or two semester credit courses which would count toward graduation. (Inasmuch as we lack one and two credit courses, these courses could help students “round out” their schedules.)

Let me emphasize that anyone offended by these suggestions should feel free to dismiss them immediately and even forget that they were ever made.

In conclusion, I would like to bring us back to the starting point: God. The love of God is not only the beginning of wisdom and understanding, but also the end of wisdom and understanding. For God is, as we have said many times, Alpha and Omega. He is Truth. In Him all things consist. It is our privilege and joy to be servants of God. As Ramm reminds us, “If we do not love God, we shall forever be at the edge of Truth,



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and to crown our folly, we shall view the edge of Truth as the center.” But as Biblical Christians, we can declare with Augustine, “Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee.”

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