

# WITH ALL YOUR MIND, LOVE GOD (NOETICALLY)

Is 11:1-2; Is 26:3; Acts 17:11; Rom 12:1-2; II Tim 2:15

- N.B. laments re current state American schools—spend more per pupil (\$11,800) than any other country but rank 27<sup>th</sup> in the world, behind Mexico and Brazil! College students, who spent 24 hours a week on academic work in 1961, now invest 14! “You can lead me to college, but you can’t make me think.”
- Corresponding Christians’ deficit—declining biblical literacy evident; sermons shift (cf. *Amusing Ourselves to Death*); periodicals (e.g. *Christianity Today & Holiness Today*) turn popular
- Jesus: love God with all our minds! He *added* a word to the OT *Shema*—love with all your mind (Gk *dianoia* means both understanding and “process of reasoning”), grasping the essence of something and thinking rightly about it

## I. PASSIVE MIND: *Tabula Rasa*

A. Capacity: absorb endless perceptions through senses

B. Components:

1. Unconscious *tabula rasa* absorbs, even in womb, myriad data, i.e. music; throughout life continually collecting sense data, recording, arranging
2. Consciously programmed Memory, Historical Consciousness/Thinking
  - a. Children’s potential (thus Greek & Latin in earlier eras); memorized poems, songs, Scriptures, multiplication tables, etc.
  - b. Adults profit: e.g. Marcus Latrell (*Sole Survivor*) & “American Soldier,” Ps 23

B. Commandment Applied:

1. Establish harmonious, Grace-Full Setting (NB *Beatific Vision* our Ultimate Goal):
  - a. Nature’s “Music of the Spheres”—find time & space for wonder
  - b. Various forms of created beauty—music, art, household decor; take care to open mind to divine
2. Develop Holy Habits:
  - a. *Shema* injunction (“You shall teach them (these words) diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you set in your house, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Dt 6: 7)
  - b. Daily habits, practices—memorizing Scriptures, hymns, quotations
3. Cultivate historical consciousness—trust, respect tradition; encourage recitation, writing

## II. ACTIVE MIND: *Thinking Clearly/Cogently* (Sophocles: “The gods plant reason in mankind, of all good gifts the highest.”)

- A. Intentionality: Prioritize Eternal/Invisible/Godly realities (cf. “fear of Lord” as Gift Spirit)—focus intently, so as to sideline distractions; practice mental concentration (e.g. John Paul II at prayer)
- B. Insight/Intuition: Insight/direct perception (not feelings) re essences (cf. “knowledge as Gift Spirit)—grasping words’ definitions; words reflect WORD; fathoming basic principles, i.e. laws thought
- C. *Intelligo*/Understanding (2 Tim 2:7)—cf. “understanding” as Gift Spirit; comprehending, standing under & adequately grasping truth (cf. “understanding as Gift Spirit; “*justified true belief*”
- D. Inference (cf. “wisdom” as Gift Spirit):
  1. Logic attuned to LOGOS; inference to best explanation; right reason
    - a. C.S. Lewis re importance logic (e.g. “trilemma” re Christ—“Why don’t they teach logic in these schools?”); Lewis: “God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than of any other slackers.”
    - b. *Orthotomein*: rightly dividing Word (2 Tim 2:15)—much like plowing furrow, laying bricks
    - c. *Testimony and Authority in the Art of Being Reasonable*—Rick Kennedy
    - d. Different, appropriate ways to reason—but *bonum hominus est secundum rationem esse*
  2. Speculative/Theoretical Wisdom—rooted in, a product of, reason, experience, enlightenment (irit)
    - a. Humility—love of, pursuit of rather than perfect possession; listening/learning stance
    - b. Unifying, synthesizing perspective—balanced (center of road); cogent “world view”
    - c. Theology (only God truly Wise) ultimate focus, source

# THE SCANDAL OF EVANGELICALISM

--Mark Noll

In *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, c. 1994), Wheaton (now Notre Dame) historian Mark Noll declares: “The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind” (p. 3). Despite numerical and financial growth, despite impressive evangelistic endeavors, “American evangelicals are not exemplary for their thinking, and they have not been so for several generations” (p. 3). Noll claims to write this polemic as “an epistle from a wounded lover” (p. ix). He thinks the intellectual poverty—the endemic anti-intellectualism—of Evangelicalism limits its influence in the broader culture and renders problematic its survival. Revivalistic churches, especially, remove the memory of tradition and the cognitive structure of the Faith, thriving on an appeal to the feelings and “needs” of their hearers.

He cites with approval the distinguished Lebanese scholar Charles Malik's judgment: “At the heart of all the problems facing Western civilization,” amply evident, “lies the state of mind and the spirit of the universities” (p. 25). So, Malik asserted, we must resolve “not only to win souls but to save minds. If you win the whole world and lose the mind of the world, you will soon discover you have not won the world” (p. 26). Evangelicals do well, saving souls, Noll thinks, but not minds, especially the mind of the world. We've failed to clarify ideas which correspond to God's ideas, failed to do what G.K. Chesterton said St Thomas Aquinas accomplished: to intellectually engage in “the praise of Life, the praise of Being, the praise of God as the Creator of the World” (p. 45).

Christian colleges such as Princeton once enabled American Evangelicals to establish learned centers capable of shaping the public mind. A century ago, however, that quickly changed. As tax-funded public universities prospered evangelicals were “utterly displaced as the intellectual arbiters of the nation” (p. 110). Reacting to a world they no longer influenced, rejecting its liberal currents, Fundamentalists, Holiness churches, and Pentecostals turned inward, neglecting if not ignoring the intellectual issues of their day. An “ardent supernaturalism” encouraged indifference to “worldly” things. Noll quotes, with approval, Martyn Lloyd-Jones' condemnation of the Keswick “higher-life” message, which focused on whole-hearted, experiential surrender to God's will, severed grin rigorous biblical and theological study. He said: “You asked me to diagnose the reasons for the present weakness [of scholarship in the holiness movement] and I am doing it. . . . If you teach that sanctification consists of “letting go” and letting the Holy Spirit do all the work, then don't blame me if you have no scholars!” (p. 124).

Like the holiness movement, Fundamentalism impoverished the Faith by reducing it to a few slogans such as “the Book, the Blood, and the Blessed Hope” (p. 133). Thus, Nathan O. Hatch says, its impact on “Christian learning” resembles Mao's “Cultural Revolution,” for “Both divorced a generation from mainline academia, thus making reintegration [into the larger worlds of learning] a difficult if not bewildering task” (p. 144). For instance, the thoughtful way with which Charles Hodge and Benjamin Warfield (two of Princeton's greatest theologians) handled Darwinianism would not be duplicated by later conservative evangelicals. That scientific data could augment and assist biblical interpretation, as Hodge and Warfield suggested, became increasingly suspect.

Consequently, today's “young earth” theorists have shackled the word creationism (simply holding there's a divine dimension to creation) with constraints and categories judged incredible by academic scientists. So it's non-Fundamentalists such as Phillip E. Johnson, who set forth the most telling objections to Darwinism (in *Darwin on Trial*) and gain a hearing in the cultural courtrooms of our land. So too it's C.S. Lewis whose “writing has constituted the single most important body of Christian thinking for American evangelicals in the twentieth century. His defense of supernatural Christianity, his ability to exploit learned culture, his example as a writer of fiction, his demonstration that the truths of the faith could be expressed in lively prose—all contributed an unusual measure of intellectual stimulation to evangelicals on this side of the water” (p. 218). That evangelicalism has not produced thinkers like C.S. Lewis is “the scandal of the Evangelical mind.” To rectify such poverty, Noll calls us to seriously study creation in all its glory, following the example of our LORD, who shaped all that is and rejoices to behold it. If God is, above all, worthy of our worship, His handiwork must surely command our attention.

To regain a hearing, to find a fulcrum of influence in our nation, Noll insists we must celebrate the intellectual vocation, nurture a caste of scholars, and provide institutional resources necessary to publish and promote their work.

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*THE STATE OF THE AMERICAN MIND:  
16 Leading Critics on the New Anti-Intellectualism*  
--ed. Mark Bauerlein & Adam Bellow

“These traits form the American posture—independent thought and action, thrift and industriousness, delayed gratification and equal opportunity” (#92).

“ . . . the dismantling of it was nearly complete by the mid-1980s” (#104).

“Multiculturalism was busy eliminating requirements in Western civilization and inserting third-rate exertions in identity politics. Student-centered pedagogies turned the learning process upside down, disrupting the transmission of wisdom from one generation to the next. Undergraduates had more freedom than ever, and they wasted it in cheap delights” (#110).

“We cherished the *pluribus* and abandoned the *unum*. The American Mind was one of the casualties” (#133).

“Here is what we have observed:

“Instead of acquiring a richer and fuller knowledge of U.S. history and civics, American students and grown-ups display astounding ignorance of them, and their blindness is matched by their indifference to the problem.

“Civic Virtue is a fading trait, our political sphere now typically understood as merely a contest of group interests. Patriotism and the common good are quaint notions.

“Individualism has evolved from ‘rugged’ version of the past into present modes of self-absorption.

“Not only has self-reliance become a spurious boast (‘You didn’t build that’), but dependency itself has become a tactical claim.

“Instead of upholding basic liberties, more and more Americans accept restrictions on speech, freedom of association, rights to privacy, and religious conscience” (#151-165).

“Taken together, these essays offer a profile of the American Mind in disarray. The profile is not a partial one. The contributors provide enough population data and expert testimony for us to draw this unfortunate inference with confidence” (#211).

“Notwithstanding all the school reforms of the last thirty years, high school students have not improved their academic achievement and in some areas have slipped—a sign of persistent failure on the part of the anti-core knowledge curriculum favored by the educational establishment” (#332).

“A fragmented elementary curriculum, emphasizing skills was the kind we had when my book [E.D. Hirsch’s *Cultural Literacy*] appeared, and it is the kind we still have. This approach is the fundamental cause of our poor performance in international comparisons, as well as the fundamental reason that we do less well than many other nations in narrowing the learning gap between rich and poor” (#367).

“We have average scores on the SAT verbal exam going back even farther, and they underwent a shocking decline of fifty-four points from 1962 to 1980. The score has wavered up and down by a few points ever since” (#562).

“A stream of opinion surveys and widely reported anecdotes document an alarming decline in biblical literacy among Americans; that is, there is ignorance of key biblical texts, stories, characters, doctrines, themes, rituals, and symbols (Pew Research; Bible Literacy Project)” (#749).

“ . . . only half of American adults can name one of the four Gospels, and an even smaller percentage can identify the first book of the Bible” #803).

“In his 1800 assessment of education in America, Pierre Samuel Du Point de Nemours observed, ‘Most young Americans . . . can read, write and cipher. Not more than four in a thousand are unable to write legibly—even neatly.’ He attributed America’s high literacy rate to frequent Bible reading, which, he also said, ‘tends to increase and formulate ideas of responsibility’” #864).

“The extent to which many colleges and universities focus more on promoting student social engagement than academic rigor likely has consequences for human capital formation in the United States” #1267).

“This research suggests a particularly disabling tendency to favor self-belief in academic ability over actual academic ability” (#2225).

“As I note in *Generation Me*, this group (born after 1980) has never known a world that emphasizes anything over the self—for instance, putting duty before gain. This generation reflects, even though it did not originate, the cultural shift toward self-focus” (#2225).

“ . . . 37 percent of high school senior had an A average in 2012, nearly twice as many as in 1976” (#2269).

## MIND NOTES/QUOTES

- ✓ “All men by Nature desire to know.” --Aristotle, *Metaphysics*
- ✓ “We are having a revival of feelings but not of the knowledge of God. The church today is more guided by feelings than by convictions. We value enthusiasm more than informed commitment.”  
--1980 Gallup Poll on Religion
- ✓ “The God of the Jews was to exist in the Word and through the Word, an unprecedented conception requiring the highest order of abstract thinking.” --Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*
- ✓ “False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of the nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, by the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion.”  
--J. Gresham Machen, *What Is Christianity?*
- ✓ “He [Christ] wants a child’s heart, but a grown-up’s head.” --C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
- ✓ “Ought not a Minister to have, First, a good understanding, a clear apprehension, a sound judgment, and a capacity of reasoning with some closeness?” --John Wesley, “An Address to the Clergy”
- ✓ “Western civilization is for the first time in its history in danger of dying. The reason is spiritual. It is losing its life, its soul; that soul was the Christian faith.”  
--Peter Kreeft & Ron Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*
- ✓ “The Christian affirmation is . . . that the Trinitarian structure which can be shown to exist in the mind of a man and in all his works is, in fact, the integral structure of the universe, and corresponds, not by pictorial imagery, but by necessary uniformity of substance, with the nature of God, in whom all that is exists.” --Dorothy Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*
- ✓ “To think Christianly is to accept all things with the mind as related, directly or indirectly, to man’s eternal destiny as the redeemed and chosen by God.” --Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind*
- ✓ Lord and Savior, true and kind, / Be the master of my mind;  
Bless and guide and strengthen still / All my powers of thought and will.  
While I ply the scholar’s task, / Jesus Christ be near, I ask;  
Help the memory, clear the brain, / Knowledge still to seek and gain.  
--H.G.C. Moule
- ✓ “It is wise to open one’s mind but only as a preliminary to closing it . . . for the supreme act of judgment and selection.” --Irving Babbitt
- ✓ “The growth of the human mind is still high adventure, in many ways the highest adventure on earth.” --Norman Cousins
- ✓ “The more extensive a man’s knowledge of what has been done, the greater will be his power of knowing what to do.” --Disraeli
- ✓ “Concepts without percepts are empty. Percepts without concepts are blind.” --Immanuel Kant
- ✓ “The man who tells you truth does not exist is asking you not to believe him. So don’t.”  
--Roger Scruton