

The Thoughtful Christian

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As the workday concluded on the Trinity campus prior to the Thanksgiving break, two students visited my office with a bag full of delicious cookies. I thanked them for their kindness and their thoughtfulness, reminding them how meaningful it was for me that they would remember those in the administration at this time of year. I then shared the cookies with others on the hallway, who likewise expressed appreciation for my consideration and thoughtfulness. As I packed my briefcase to go to the house, I included a new book that arrived on my desk that day. One of the endorsements on the back of that new book lauded the “wise insights to produce a lucid and thoughtful proposal.” Thoughtful in the first instance describes a kind-hearted remembrance. Thoughtful in the second instance expands the description to include the idea of being considerate. The third usage points to the kind of reflective thinking that is noteworthy and commendable.

To describe someone as thoughtful may well suggest that this person is characteristically kind and considerate of others. Using the adjective in this manner would be quite consistent with New Testament teaching. The Apostle Paul told the Philippians to “consider others better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3b). In Ephesians, we read “be kind and compassionate to one another” (Ephesians 4:32a). While this understanding of “thoughtful” is an important aspect of the Christian life, our primary focus in this essay has to do with thinking deeply or carefully or reflectively about things.¹ In doing so, we will explore what it means for thoughtful Christians to “think Christianly,” to love God with our minds (Matthew 22:37).²

I. Thoughtful Christians Seek to Love God with Heart, Soul, and Mind

Becoming a thoughtful Christian means learning to think well and to think Christianly. And in noting these two points, we want to say that they must be both at once. Making this observation recognizes that it is possible to be thoughtful without being Christian, and that it is possible to be a

Christian without being thoughtful. Frankly, in our current duality-promoting context, either of these would be easier for most people to contemplate. What is challenging is to be both thoughtful *and* Christian in vigorous and vital engagement with each other and interdependence among each other.³ We believe, however, that such integration is precisely what is needed at this time in the church and in our culture.⁴

To be a thoughtful Christian does not mean that one only thinks about Christian matters, though the way one thinks should be thoroughly shaped by Christian teaching, the pattern of Christian truth.⁵ In doing so, the thoughtful Christian will explore a wide, complex, and diverse range of topics, through the lens of the Christian faith.⁶ Such exploration implies more than being thoughtful about life in general, even by a person who claims to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, for unfortunately, it is quite possible to be a Christ-follower without thinking faithfully or consistently in Christian categories. We also recognize that there are times, even when we want to be thoughtful Christians that we, like the Apostle Paul, often do not do the good we want to do (Romans 7:14-16). Being a thoughtful Christian then has more to do with the intentional way we process ideas, issues, and information, learning to think in a Christian manner on a consistent basis.

We certainly want to love God with our hearts and our souls. We must, however, as Christ-followers who desire to be Great Commandment Christians in line with the teaching of Jesus (Matthew 22:37-39) love God with our minds as well.⁷ Learning to be a thoughtful Christian, or, to express it differently, to think in Christian categories, will shape the way we think about all aspects of life, whether we are talking about businesses, health care agencies, governments, social structures, recreational activities, and yes, our homes and churches, too.⁸ To be a thoughtful Christian means that we seek to think differently about the way we live and love, the way we worship and serve, the way we work to earn our livelihood, the way we learn and teach.

More than just new ideas and enhanced programs for churches and Christian organizations, the need of the hour is for thoughtful Christ-followers who reflect distinctively Christian thinking,

the kind of serious-minded thinking that results in faithful engagement with the great ideas of history and the issues of our day.⁹ Such thinking means seeing all of life and learning from a Christian vantage point, thinking shaped by the Christian faith.¹⁰

Building on this brief introduction, which calls on thoughtful Christians to be Great Commandment Christians, let us turn our attention to the different areas or themes that characterize thoughtful Christ-followers who seek to love God with their minds. We will focus on themes that encourage and help men and women become serious about their Christian faith which will help prepare them for the challenges and opportunities awaiting them in the changing context of the twenty-first century. At this point, it will be helpful to explore eight larger categories that we believe will help all of us understand what is involved in learning to think Christianly, while simultaneously strengthening our efforts to do so:

- Thoughtful Christians Seek to Connect Faith Thinking with the Unity of All Knowledge;
- Thoughtful Christians Prioritize the Pattern of Christian Truth;
- Thoughtful Christians See the Relationship Between the Pattern of Christian Truth and Christian Worldview Development;
- Thoughtful Christians Affirm the Enduring Authority of the Bible;
- Thoughtful Christians Recognize the Christian Intellectual Tradition as a Valuable Resource;
- Thoughtful Christians Emphasize Reading and the Place of Cultural Engagement;
- Thoughtful Christians Underscore the Importance of Faithful Christian Living and Character Formation;
- Thoughtful Christians Envision Ongoing Service in the Church, to the Culture, and for the World.

II. Thoughtful Christians Connect Faith Thinking with the Unity of All Knowledge

Thoughtful Christians who seek to follow Jesus Christ in a wholehearted manner begin with what some have called “faith thinking.” As Trevor Hart notes, “This pursuit is an inevitable corollary of the existence of faith itself,” for faith cannot help asking questions and seeking answers.¹¹ Faith thinking, which Hart describes as theologically-informed thinking, is not reserved for a small number of academic theologians, but is an inevitable consequence of the life of thoughtful Christians in the real world. The large majority of Christians will not become scholars or public intellectuals, nor will they necessarily become academic theologians or pastor-theologians. It would, however, be our dream for all thoughtful Christians to be able to think Christianly, to think in theological categories, and to do so in a way that strengthens opportunities with friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members for the kind of conversations that Chuck Colson described as “backyard apologetics.”¹²

Both Trevor Hart and Alvin Plantinga affirm that thoughtful Christians need to articulate a conception of the rational process that recognizes the need for intellectual responsibility in Christian belief.¹³ They recognize, however, that a pure empirical or evidentialist approach will accept only certain tangible evidence, prejudicing against any inquiry into non-empirical matters. In doing so, an empiricist approach in effect approaches the question of belief not from a neutral vantage point, but from a secularist perspective, which results in the lack of a level playing field for those who embrace the Christian faith. In line with P.T. Forsyth,¹⁴ Hart and Plantinga maintain that Christian beliefs have rational justification and are thus compatible with faith thinking, making sense of the need for these beliefs to be more than a privatized matter that is not subject to any rational or ethical constraints.¹⁵

Beginning with these faith commitments that shape our thinking, thoughtful Christians recognize that even though it may not be readily apparent at first glance, there is a unity of all knowledge that can be observed, because all true knowledge flows from the One Creator to his one creation. Thus, all truth has its source in God, composing a single universe of knowledge.¹⁶ Faith thinking involves the development and construction of a convictional way of seeing the world by

which we can see, learn, and interpret life from the vantage point of God's revelation to us.

Thoughtful Christians are encouraged to be intellectually curious and to grow in their understanding and appreciation of God, of his creation and grace, and of humanity's place of privilege and responsibility in God's world.

Faith thinking involves the renewal of the mind by God's Spirit (Romans 12:1-2), for such thinking is shaped by God's revelation to us as we contemplate God and his creation. In doing so, we recall Augustine's model of faith seeking understanding, acknowledging that wherever we find truth, it is the Lord's, even as thoughtful believers struggle with issues and carry on debate in pursuit of truth. We will hear afresh the admonition of the Apostle Paul to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10).¹⁷

Thoughtful Christians recognize their dependence on God in seeking to follow this course, for such a lofty calling, as noted, can only take place as our minds are renewed by God's Spirit (Romans 12:2). A serious commitment to faith thinking, to the renewing of minds, esteems exploration and genuine intellectual struggle while wrestling with the culture-shaping ideas and issues of the past and the present. We do so with faith commitments, seeking to discover and expound God's truth as it has been revealed in creation and redemption, and as it has been made alive and understandable for us by the ministry of God's Spirit.¹⁸

III. Thoughtful Christians Prioritize the Pattern of Christian Truth

Many in our contemporary world think the idea of a thoughtful Christian to be a contradiction in terms because they have been led to believe that knowledge no longer has any connection with faith and, in fact, often seems to be in opposition to it. Thus faith thinking, in the minds of many, sounds like the words of a Kris Kristofferson song, something "partly true and partly fiction." Yet Hart, Plantinga, Gerald Bray and others have refused to let non-Christian philosophy have the upper hand with regards to an understanding of knowledge and rationality.¹⁹ Kevin Vanhoozer suggests that this conversation is not merely an epistemological dispute, but a theological

one. If indeed it is the case that “in Christ all things hold together” (Colossians 1:17), then a belief is justified if it coheres with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This means that reason does not stand over the gospel, deciding what to reject or accept. Instead the gospel, the Christian faith, becomes the interpretive framework with which to make sense of all other knowledge and experience.²⁰ Offering further commentary, Vanhoozer contends:

It is not necessary to apologize for taking Scripture as one’s ultimate epistemic norm. As postmoderns and presuppositionalists have reminded us, everyone thinks and reasons on the basis of some interpretive framework or another. On this view rationality is less a matter of starting points or neutral ground than it is a matter of being willing to put one’s faith commitments to any number of critical and existential tests. Jesus staked his own claim to be the way, truth, and life of God by his words and by the “argument,” so to speak, of his cross. Similarly, our rational defense of the gospel unfolds within faith’s interpretive framework.²¹

This interpretive framework, which guides the thoughtful Christian in faith thinking, in thinking Christianly, is shaped by primary Christian doctrines, what H. E. W. Turner has referred to as “the pattern of Christian truth,” those key doctrines believed consistently and in consensus by Christians throughout the centuries.²² We now turn our attention to these important doctrines that significantly inform all aspects of Christian thinking.

1. Creation: The Work of the Creator God

Christian thinking recognizes two broad dimensions of reality: God, the Creator, and the world, his creation. Scripture teaches that God, without the use of any preexisting material, brought into being everything that is. Both the opening verse of the Bible and the initial sentence of the Apostles’ Creed confess God as Creator. The doctrine of creation contains truth of utmost importance: everything that is, was created by God. The world, which was created by God, has been created for the good of men and women, who have been created in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-28).²³

This world is distinct from its Creator, the Triune God. The significance of the Trinitarian understanding of creation recognizes that it is not just any god who created the world; it is the Triune God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The great thinkers of the early church wrote numerous commentaries on the creation story in Genesis 1-3, more so than any other part of the Bible, because

they understood that it contradicted the fundamental beliefs of their inherited pagan culture and challenged them to replace it with something that was true to reality.²⁴

2. Humanity and the Fall

Men and women are the highest form of God's creation. The primary reason for stressing the importance of men and women in God's plan for creation, over against the rest of God's creation, relates to the distinctive description regarding humanity in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27).²⁵ Because they are created in the image of God, men and women have dignity, rationality, morality, spirituality, and personality.²⁶

Even though men and women are created in God's image, the entrance of sin into the world has resulted in negative influences upon God's creation, especially humans. As a result of sin, men and women are separated from God, having fallen short of his glory (Romans 3: 23). The image of God, even though tainted, tarnished, and marred by sin, has not been lost (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). The role of exercising stewardship over the earth (Genesis 1:28) has been drastically disturbed by the effects of sin on humans. The ability to live in right relationship with God, with others, with nature, and with our very own selves has now been corrupted.²⁷

The impact of sin is significant when reflecting upon the matters of our relationship to God. Because of the entrance of sin into the world and our inheritance of Adam's sinful nature (Romans 5:12-19), we are by nature hostile to God and estranged from him (Romans 8:7; Ephesians 2:1-3). We thus have wills that do not obey, eyes that do not see, and ears that do not hear because spiritually we are dead to God. Because of sin, all dimensions of human beings, including our thinking, have been distorted. The effects of sin, fallenness, brokenness, and depravity, involve our total, willful rejection of the will and glory of God.²⁸

3. Salvation in Christ

Because of sin, all in this world are estranged from God, but the biblical answer is that Jesus Christ has regained what was lost in Adam (Romans 5:12-21). The grace of God has provided our

restoration and brought about a right relationship with God, with one another, with nature, and with ourselves. Grace declares that salvation is not the culmination of humanity's quest for God but that it resides in the initiative of God toward men and women (Ephesians 1:4-7).²⁹ Grace comes to us while we are still in our sins and brings spiritual transformation based on the accomplished crosswork of Jesus Christ. Grace is "God's free and loving favor to the ill-deserving."³⁰ God does not graciously accept us because he sees our change for the better, as if conversion were the basis for receiving God's grace. Instead the Bible pictures God's coming into our lives, taking us just as we are because he is abundantly merciful (Ephesians 2:1-10).³¹

As a result of God's grace, believers experience salvation from sin which involves conversion to God. All of salvation is of God, yet we respond in faith and commitment. The Bible expresses these truths in various pictures, underscoring throughout that God is the author and finisher of our salvation (Hebrews 12:2). These various themes of regeneration, justification, adoption, and forgiveness are presented as the new sphere of union with Christ for all who have placed their faith in him (John 15; Romans 6:1-11; Ephesians 1-3-14). Our union with Christ presents us in a new position before God.³² Experientially, the union of believers with Christ is one of the most tender concepts expressed in Scripture; it is invisible and imperceptible to the senses; it is unfathomable, escaping all inward vision.

We recognize that this gift of salvation rests in what Jesus Christ has done for fallen men and women. Christ's life and death exemplified the love of God³³ and exerted an influence for good by providing a model of servanthood and sacrifice. More importantly, Christ's death provided for sinners a sinless substitutionary sacrifice that satisfies divine justice, an incomprehensibly valuable redemption delivering sinners from estrangement to full fellowship and inheritance in the household of God. As P.T. Forsyth has stated, "The blood of Christ stands not simply for the sting of sin on God, but the scourge of God on sin, not simply for God's sorrow over sin but for God's wrath on

it.”³⁴ Therefore we cannot rightfully understand the cross unless we perceive both God’s anguish over sin and his infinite holiness that refuses to tolerate sin.³⁵

We trustingly confess and affirm that Jesus Christ as the God-Man has fully revealed God to men and women. Having lived a sinless life, Christ died in our place for our sins. He now sits exalted at God’s right hand, a position of honor and exaltation, exercising his rule and dominion. Those who have placed their trust in Jesus Christ for salvation gladly acknowledge Jesus as Lord, our prophet, priest, and king, who has completely revealed God, reconciled humankind with God, and who sits enthroned as ruler of God’s kingdom and head of his church.³⁶ In him, we place our trust and hope, offering our thanksgiving for the salvation he has provided for us.

4. The Holy Spirit: Renewal and Community

With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2), there was a universalizing of the ministry and mission of Jesus. Jesus was God’s final word to humanity, and the Spirit’s role was not to bring some new revelation of his own, but to bear witness to Jesus and to interpret and explicate the full implications of God’s final word. The Spirit came in order to enable and unite believers in an unparalleled manner. The ultimate purpose of the Spirit was to bring life and renewal to Christ-followers, drawing them together into the new community, the church of Jesus Christ, and to empower this community for mission, which was the spreading of good news and exalting the name of Christ. Life in the Spirit energizes and enables the new community of faith.³⁷

The basis for life in the Spirit must never be forgotten. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Spirit applies justification, regeneration, sanctification, and ultimate glorification to the lives of believers.³⁸ Life in the Spirit is living out, by the Spirit’s empowerment, what believers are because of Christ, exalting him in the expansion of the church’s worship, ministry and mission, which includes conversion, evangelism, fellowship, renewal, and holiness.³⁹

5. Eschatology: God’s Rule and Reign

God's final rule and reign will bring victory when Christ returns to establish and consummate his kingdom. Regardless of the diligent and industrious attempts by men and women to bring about righteousness and peace to earth, true peace and righteousness will take place only when Jesus Christ comes again. The age-long quest of the nations can only be fulfilled by the work of Christ. Sincere believers differ over their understanding of the nature and chronology of Christ's return as well as their expectations for the kingdom itself.⁴⁰ All orthodox Christians believe that following Christ's return, the dead will be raised, both the righteous and the wicked, which leads to judgment and then to the eternal state.⁴¹

One of the great realities and benefits of the second coming of Christ in the thought of faithful Christians is the assurance that God's whole program of redemption will be accomplished. The vision of the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:1-7) points to a restored creation, a renewed fellowship, and the gift of everlasting blessing.⁴² God's providential plan includes not only the redemption of individuals, the redeeming of his church, but also the redemption of all of creation. Creation, which was spoken into existence by God and was defiled by the entrance of sin into the world, will also be included in God's ultimate work of redemption (Romans 8:18-27). At that time not only will the Antichrist and Satan be defeated, but also sin, death, and sorrow will be eliminated.⁴³

The eternal climax of redemptive history is seen in the description of the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22).⁴⁴ The general image of a future Jerusalem symbolizes the fulfillment of many of God's promises to his people (Isaiah 2:1-5; 49:14-18; 52; 54; 60-62; 65:17-25; Jeremiah 31:38-40; Micah 4:1-4; Zechariah 14). As is true of Christ's return and other features of his rule and reign, the trustworthiness of scripture underscores our confidence that these prophecies are indeed true. The picture of the new Jerusalem emphasizes that the people of God will be a universal community of redeemed individuals living together in love.⁴⁵

The ultimate state of the people of God and their reward is presented under diverse metaphors such as the bride (Revelation 21:2, 9) and the holy city (Revelation 21:9). All darkness and all tears will be banished (Revelation 21:4; 22:5). The face of the Lord will provide all the light that is needed (Revelation 22:4-5). The holy city remains the focal point for the existence of all the redeemed in the new heaven and the new earth. It is, however, the missing item in the description of this place that provides the most moving element in the new Jerusalem. There is no temple because “God the Almighty, and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:22). The final culmination of God’s plan far surpasses any Old Testament expectation. Ultimately, unbroken fellowship with God through the Lamb of God provides the central feature of the eternal state.⁴⁶

For all eternity the redeemed of the Lord will worship the triune God supremely without impurity. We will enjoy fellowship with him without conflict. We will serve the living God forever and ever. Thoughtful Christians, with eagerness and expectancy, hope for that day. As thoughtful followers of the exalted Christ, we can at this time, by faith, experience this transforming worship, fellowship, and service, even as we employ this doctrinal interpretive framework to help answer the questions related to the shaping of a Christian worldview. It is to those questions that we now turn our attention.

IV. Thoughtful Christians See the Relationship Between the Pattern of Christian Truth and a Christian Worldview Development

The reality is that everyone has a worldview. Some worldviews are incoherent, being merely a smorgasbord of ideas from natural, supernatural, premodern, modern, and postmodern options. An examined worldview, however, is more than a private personal viewpoint; it is a comprehensive life system, shaped by scripture and influenced by key Christian doctrines, as well as the Christian intellectual tradition, that seeks to answer the basic questions of life.⁴⁷ Aware of the challenges of this “secular age”⁴⁸ and the loss of plausibility structures,⁴⁹ a Christian worldview helps encourage wholehearted devotion to distinctively Christian thinking, providing what Graham A. Cole describes

as a frame of reference that tells a coherent story while illuminating the actual world in which we live.⁵⁰

The beginning point for building a Christian worldview is found in the confession that we “believe in God, the Father, Maker of heaven and earth” (The Apostles’ Creed). We recognize that all true knowledge and wisdom flows from the one Creator to his creation. From these building blocks, we will be prepared to wrestle with questions such as the following:

- Where did we come from?
- Who are we?
- What has gone wrong with the world?
- What solution can be offered to deal with these challenges?

In addition, a Christian worldview must seek not only to answer these key questions of life, but to explore their general implications or specific applications as well.⁵¹

A Christian worldview must offer a way to live that is consistent with reality by seeking to present a comprehensive understanding of all areas of life and thought. The beginning point noted above brings us into the presence of God without delay. The central affirmation of scripture is not only that there is a God, but also that God has acted and spoken in history.⁵² God is Lord and King over the world, ruling all things for his own glory, displaying his imperfections in all that he does in order that humans and angels may worship and adore him.

To think wrongly about God is idolatry (Psalm 50:21). Thinking rightly about God leads to eternal life (John 17:3) and should be the believer’s life objective (Jeremiah 9:23-24). We can think rightly about God because he is knowable (1 Corinthians 2:11), yet we must remain mindful that he is simultaneously incomprehensible (Romans 11:33-36). God can be known, but he cannot be completely known (Deuteronomy 29:29).⁵³

As stated clearly in our earlier section on creation, we recognize that God is personal and differentiated from other beings, from nature, and from the universe. In contrast, other worldviews say that God is part of the world, creating a continual process. The process itself, it is claimed, is God—or is becoming God. Yet scripture affirms that God is self-existent, dependent on nothing external to himself. He is infinite, meaning that God is not only unlimited but that nothing outside God can limit God. The creating and redeeming God is infinite in relation to time (eternal), in relation to knowledge (omniscient), and in relation to power (omnipotent). He is sovereign and unchanging, infinite and personal, transcendent and immanent; God is holy, righteous, just, good, true, faithful, loving, gracious, and merciful.⁵⁴

Without the use of any preexisting material, God brought into being everything that is. Creation reveals God (Psalm 19) and brings glory to him (Isaiah 43:7). All of creation was originally good but is now imperfect because of the entrance of sin and its effect on creation (Genesis 3:16-19). This is, however, only a temporary imperfection (Romans 8:19-22), for creation will be redeemed in the final work of God, the new creation.

The creator God should in no way be separated from the God who provides redemption in Jesus Christ, and who gives new life through his Holy Spirit. Creation itself is the work of the Trinitarian God, who is the source of all things. This means that God has brought the world into existence out of nothing through a purposeful act of his free will. A Christian worldview affirms that God is the sovereign and almighty Lord of all existence. Such an affirmation rejects any form of dualism—that matter has eternally existed, or that matter must, therefore, be evil since it is in principle opposed to God, the source of all good.

Furthermore, a Christian worldview contends that God is set apart from and transcends his creation. It also maintains that God is a purposeful God who creates in freedom. In creation and in God's provision and preservation for creation, he is working out his ultimate purposes for humanity

and the world. This affirms the overall unity and intelligibility of the universe. In this unity we see God's greatness, goodness, and wisdom.⁵⁵

Our survey regarding the pattern of Christian truth in the previous section helps us answer key questions of life: "who are we?", "where did we come from?", "what has gone wrong with the world?", and "what solutions can be offered?" A Christian worldview, in addressing these questions, provides a framework that helps us fulfill our responsibility for God-centered thinking and living. Any articulation of a Christian worldview must wrestle with the reality of sin. We can affirm that people choose to do good, but a Christian worldview helps us distinguish between doing good in a way that may be beneficial in a general fashion for society and doing the ultimate good, which is the goal of pleasing God. Central to a Christian worldview message is the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). The resurrection establishes Jesus' lordship and deity, as well as guaranteeing the salvation of sinners (see Romans 1:3-4; 4:24-25). Jesus' resurrection enables believers to see, think, and live anew.⁵⁶

A Christian worldview becomes a shaping force for thoughtful Christians, giving us a sense of God's plan and purpose for the world. Our identity is shaped by this worldview. We no longer see ourselves as alienated sinners. A Christian worldview is not escapism but an energizing motivation for godly and faithful thinking and living in the here-and-now. In the midst of life's challenges and struggles, a Christian worldview provides confidence and hope for the future while helping to stabilize life, serving as an anchor to link us to God's faithfulness and steadfastness.⁵⁷

A Christian worldview also provides a framework for ethical thinking. We recognize that humans, who are made in God's image, are essentially moral beings. We also recognize that the fullest embodiment of good, love, holiness, grace, and truth is found in Jesus Christ (John 1:14-18).⁵⁸ A Christian worldview has implications for understanding history. We see that history is not cyclical or random. Rather, we see history as linear, a meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfillment of God's purposes for humanity.⁵⁹ Human history will climax where it began—on the

earth. This truth is another distinctive of Christian thinking, for Christianity is historical at its heart. According to scripture, God has acted decisively in history, revealing himself in specific acts and events. Moreover, God will act to bring history to its providential destiny and planned conclusion.⁶⁰

God who has acted in history in past events will also act in the future to consummate this age. So when we ask, “How will it end?” we do not simply or suddenly pass out of the realm of history; we pass to that which is nevertheless certain of occurring because God is behind it and is himself the one who tells us it will come to pass.⁶¹ Developing a Christian worldview is best understood as an ever-advancing process for us in which Christian convictions more and more shape our participation in culture. This disciplined, vigorous, and unending process will help shape how we assess culture and our place in it. Otherwise, we open ourselves to the possibility that culture will shape us and our thinking. Thus a Christian worldview offers a distinctive way of thinking, seeing, and doing, based on a new way of being.⁶²

A Christian worldview is a coherent way of seeing life, a perspective distinct from such philosophies and approaches as deism, naturalism, and materialism (whether Darwinistic, humanistic, or Marxist), existentialism, polytheism, pantheism, mysticism, or deconstructionistic postmodernism.⁶³ The theistic emphasis of Christianity provides bearings and direction when confronted with New Age spirituality or secularistic and pluralistic approaches to truth and morality. Fear about the future, suffering, disease, and poverty are informed by a Christian worldview grounded in the redemptive work of Christ and the hope that is ours in him. Contrary to meaningless and purposeless nihilistic perspectives, a Christian worldview offers meaning and purpose for the living of these days, recognizing that God is guiding history toward the fulfillment of his providential plan.⁶⁴

V. Thoughtful Christians Affirm the Enduring Authority of the Bible

The foundation for the pattern of Christian truth and for a Christian worldview is the Bible, God’s Word to us. The Bible describes itself as a special book. Even before the canonization of the

sacred books, importance was attached to the inspired writings. Moses referred to these writings as “everything the Lord had said” in “the book of the Covenant” (Exodus 24:4-7). Joshua’s farewell address was written “in the book of the law of God” (Joshua 24:26). Similarly, the prophets and the apostles thought of their writings as “the very words of God” (Romans 3:2). Jesus declared that scripture is the word of God that “cannot be broken” (John 10:35). The Apostle Paul confessed that “all scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). We can affirm that the prophetic-apostolic word is God’s word written. Without this writing there would be no scriptures and therefore no Word of God available to us.⁶⁵

God has not abandoned us but has made himself known to us in his revelation to us. God’s special revelation is not private, but public. It is not only particular, meaning God has made himself known to specific people at specific times in specific places, but it is also progressive, propositional, and personal. The context of this revelation is primarily God himself, his works, and his word. It is the manifestation of truth about God, his character, his actions, and his relationship with his creation.⁶⁶ God is pleased to reveal himself and his majestic word to people of faith. Our response of faith to this Word, recorded and interpreted by the prophets and the apostles, calls for us to embrace with humility and teachable hearts, without finding fault, whatever is taught in holy scripture.

Thoughtful Christians will find in inspired scripture a message about God and his purposes, including the creation of the universe. The Bible describes the call of Abraham, the giving of the Law, and the establishment of the Kingdom, the division of the Kingdom, and the captivity and restoration of Israel. Scripture sees humankind as fallen from a sinless condition, now separated from God apart from God’s salvific grace. The promise of a coming Messiah who will redeem men and women and reign as king appears throughout the Old Testament. The message of redemption in the Word of God claims that believers are restored to favor with God through the sacrificial and atoning death of Christ.⁶⁷

The confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Savior of the world, is at the heart of the Christian faith and is central to the meaning of holy scriptures. Thoughtful Christians not only recognize this message, but also affirm the Bible's inspiration, truthfulness, authority, and normative nature. We evidence our concern for biblical authority by careful interpretation and theological reflection, as well as faithful proclamation, repentance, and prayer.⁶⁸ An affirmation that the Bible is fully inspired and totally truthful is important because it is the foundation that establishes the complete extent of the Bible's authority.⁶⁹

Thoughtful Christians must choose to articulate a view of the Bible for the contemporary community of faith that is faithful to and in continuity with the consensus of historic positions in the church that have characteristically recognized the Bible as the written Word of God. Building upon that foundation block we can relate to one another in love and humility, bringing about truth, fellowship, and community and resulting not only in right doctrine, but also in right practice before a watching world.⁷⁰ The Bible is the primary source of God's self-revelation for his people today. Even though times and cultures change, the basic needs shared by men and women of all ages and races in all times and cultures remain the same, and thus the message of God is normative, authoritative, and applicable as much for thoughtful Christians in the twenty-first century as the first.⁷¹ We acknowledge that scripture speaks to the spiritual needs of men and women, but more importantly it reveals the truth of and about God. We confess that all scripture is inspired and is the true, reliable, Word of God for the people of God.⁷² Beyond these affirmations and articulations about the Word of God, we willingly and happily commit ourselves to it by placing our trust and confidence in the truthful, trustworthy, reliable, authoritative Word of God.

VI. Thoughtful Christians Recognize the Christian Intellectual Tradition as a Valuable Resource

The Christian intellectual tradition serves as a valuable resource for thoughtful Christians, helping them understand the way that Christians through the years have read the Bible, formulated doctrine, provided education, and engaged the culture.⁷³ The apostle Paul, writing to the church at

Thessalonica, urged the followers of Jesus Christ to “stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Similarly, the apostle exhorted Timothy, his apostolic legate to “keep...the pattern of...teaching” (2 Timothy 1:13). The history of Christianity is best understood as a chain of memory.⁷⁴

Wherever the Christian faith has been found, there has been a close association with the written Word of God, with books, education, and learning. Studying and interpreting the Bible became natural for members of the early Christian community, having inherited the practice from late Judaism. Virginia Stem Owens has suggested that studying literature developed from the practice of studying and interpreting the Bible.⁷⁵ The Christian intellectual tradition has its roots in the interpretation of holy scripture. From the church’s earliest days, Christians inherited the approaches to biblical interpretation found in the writings of both intertestamental Judaism and the contemporary Graeco-Roman world. From this dual heritage, there is an observable continuity with the hermeneutical methods of the rabbis and Philo as well as the followers of Plato and Aristotle. Yet, a discontinuity is also clearly evident as early Christianity established its own uniqueness by separating itself from Judaism and the surrounding Graeco-Roman religions.⁷⁶

Since the earliest days of Christian history, Christians have drawn upon the Bible in various ways. The rich heritage has shaped the Christian tradition in both individual and corporate practices.⁷⁷ In order to recover this valuable resource for our contemporary context, we must seek to learn from interpreters of scripture, from theologians, and from educators, as well as other Christian leaders. We can learn to think deeply about the things of God from representatives of this tradition who have gone before us and on whose shoulders we now stand. Justin Martyr and Irenaeus were probably among the first in postapostolic times to articulate the importance of thinking in Christian categories. In Alexandria in the third century, both Clement and Origen instructed their converts not only in doctrine, but in science, literature, and philosophy. Augustine in the fifth century, in *On*

Christian Doctrine, penned the thought that every true and good Christian should understand that wherever we find truth, it is the Lord's.⁷⁸

Similar patterns may be found throughout history, for wherever the gospel has been received, educational entities and Christian literacy have generally followed.⁷⁹ This legacy can be traced not only though Bernard of Clairvaux and Thomas Aquinas, but also Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, and Melancthon.⁸⁰ We learn much from post-Reformation philosophers, scientists, theologians, and literary scholars like Pascal, Kepler, Edwards, Washington, Lewis, Sayers, and numerous others.⁸¹ This pattern of Christian truth lies at the heart of the Christian intellectual tradition, a pattern that is both shaped by and informed by our confession of the Christian faith.⁸² As we learn from the tradition, we will see our faith strengthened and our orthodox commitments renewed, commitments to the divine nature and authority of God's written word, to the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ, to a heartfelt confession regarding the holy Trinity, to the uniqueness of the gospel message and the enabling work of God's Holy Spirit, to salvation by grace through faith, to the global church, to the hope of the coming kingdom, and to the sacredness of life and family.⁸³

Thoughtful Christians will work to develop a model of dynamic orthodoxy in conversation with Nicaea, Chalcedon, Augustine, Bernard, Luther, Calvin, Wesley, the Pietists, and the influential global Christian leaders of the twenty-first century in order to reclaim and build upon the great Christian intellectual tradition. The great tradition of Christian thinking not only helps to shape our biblical and theological understanding, but also provides a vast resource for philosophy, art, music, literature, drama, architecture, law, political and social thought, and other forms of cultural and academic engagement. Interestingly, Christian reflection and devotional practices were influenced by the work of this significant heritage.⁸⁴ It is our hope that as we wrestle with the many challenges facing Christ-followers in our day that the great tradition of Christian thinking will provide valuable resources and examples to encourage our faith and shape significant ecclesiastical, educational, and

cultural pursuits, even as we grow in our appreciation for and commitment to thinking Christianly for the glory of God.⁸⁵

VII. Thoughtful Christians Emphasize Reading and the Place of Cultural Engagement

Thoughtful Christians will learn to draw upon Scripture, the pattern of Christian truth, and the Christian intellectual tradition in order to provide a framework to engage the ideas and issues of the day. An important aspect of one's development in these areas involves reading well, wisely, and widely. Reading helps to prepare our minds not simply to understand the ideas of the world but to engage these ideas as well. We learn to read well, to joyously find the good, the true, and the beautiful, recognizing that God is the source of all of these gifts. Such a perspective seems to be consistent with the practice of the Apostle Paul, who from his Roman prison cell reminded Timothy to "bring...my scrolls, especially the parchments" (2 Timothy 4:13) as well as to think about whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8). Similarly, as Bruce Lockerbie has shown, there has been "a passion for learning," a passion for reading, among the significant Christian thinkers and leaders through the centuries from which we can learn and on which we can build.⁸⁶ Reading is the foundation for intellectual development, the shaping of thoughtful Christians.

Reading allows us to understand and interpret the events and issues of our day, considering these things in light of God's purposes for the world. Susan Wise Bauer, in her important work, *The Well-Educated Mind: A Guide to the Classical Education You Never Had* provides direction to help us learn to read interpretively, and not just for gathering information, noting that wrestling with important issues marks us forever.⁸⁷ C.S. Lewis reminds us of the value and importance of making good choices when we read, making a strong case for reading older books.⁸⁸ Mortimer Adler has written the classic, must-read book that describes the dimensions, approaches, and goals for reading.⁸⁹ As we have previously noted, the foundation for any reading program for thoughtful

Christians is the Bible.⁹⁰ We recognize that these things are not just suggestions or theories, but shaping elements for an all-consuming way of life, applicable to all spheres of life.

James Orr, in *The Christian View of God and the World*, maintains that there is a definite Christian view of things that has a character, and unity of its own, and stands in sharp contrast with counter theories and speculation offered by those opposed to biblical revelation.⁹¹ Christian thinking has the stamp of reason and reality which can stand the tests of both history and experience. Such a holistic approach offers a stability of thought, a unity of comprehensive insight that bears not only on the theological sphere but on the whole of thought that shapes theology, natural and social sciences, law, history, healthcare, the arts, the humanities, business, education, and all aspects of life.⁹²

While many other important examples could be offered, including matters of race, poverty, economics, healthcare, violence, bioethical issues, and so many more, we will propose six particular examples that have relevance for contemporary Christians, pointing in directions for thoughtful Christians to consider at greater length.

1. Sexuality Sexuality has become a major topic in the Western world over the past fifty years, and particularly during this new century. Much confusion exists regarding this topic among Christians and non-Christians. Sexuality is a good gift in the covenant relationship of mutual self-giving marriage. Outside the covenant marriage both heterosexual and homosexual relations are sinful and have distorted meaning, a self-serving purpose, and negative consequences.⁹³
2. Environmental Concerns Another pressing issue of our day is the focus on environmental concerns. Environmental stewardship means we have a responsibility to the nonhuman aspect of God's creation. Since God's plan of redemption includes his earthly creation as well as humans (see Romans 8:18-27), we should do all we can to live in it carefully, responsibly, and lovingly.⁹⁴
3. Arts and Recreation A third area important in our culture includes the arts and recreation. The arts and recreation are significant parts of human creativity and community. We need to develop

critical skills of analysis and evaluation so that we are informed, intentional, and reflective about what we create, see, and do.⁹⁵

4. Science For almost two centuries science has been at the forefront of our modern world. We must explore how scientific issues should be addressed. An understanding of God and his creation includes the knowledge we gain through scientific investigation. With the lens of faith in place, a picture of God's world emerges where science and faith can be viewed in a complementary fashion.⁹⁶
5. Technology Technology can become either an instrument through which we fulfill our role as God's stewards or an object of worship that will eventually rule us. Christian thinking provides balance and insight for understanding this critical aspect of the twenty-first century.⁹⁷
6. Work Important for any culture is an understanding of work. Work is a gift from God and is to be pursued with excellence for God's glory, thus connecting Sunday to Monday becomes an important priority for thoughtful Christians. We recognize that all honest professions are honorable; that the gifts and abilities we have for our vocation, our calling, come from God; and that prosperity and promotions are gifts of God's grace and favor.⁹⁸

VIII. Thoughtful Christians Underscore the Importance of Faithful Christian Living and Character Formation

To the extent we succeed in putting these important tenets into practice, we will begin to see the holistic development of the intellectual, spiritual, moral, and character formation among thoughtful Christians.⁹⁹ At the heart of this development is the belief that God has revealed himself in creation, in history, in our conscience, and ultimately in Christ, and that this revelation is now primarily available to us in Holy Scripture. This revealed truth is the foundation of all we believe, teach, and do. We have observed that this God-revealed truth provides the framework for understanding and interpreting our world, the events of human history, as well as our responsibilities

toward God and one another in this world, helping us know how to love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength.¹⁰⁰

We believe that a person who thinks deeply about the things of God and applies these truths wisely will be equipped to live well in relation to others in the world, preparing Christians for thoughtful ethical and moral reflection. We also recognize that the fullest embodiment of good, love, holiness, grace, and truth is found in Jesus Christ (John 1:14-18). As Robert Saucy insightfully reminds us, right thinking, as important as it may be, is not all there is to the Christian faith, we must also “mind the heart.”¹⁰¹

Thoughtful Christians will seek to initiate spiritual transformation through the renewing of minds (Romans 12:2) and the doing of the Word (James 1:22). We are to love our neighbor and care for orphans and widows (James 1:27). We are to be agents of reconciliation in the church and in society, building bridges where there are walls, particularly with reference to the racial divide that has haunted America since its inception (See Ephesians 2:11-18).¹⁰²

This is what it means to love our neighbor, to be doers of the Word.¹⁰³ We are normally hearers of the Word, thinkers about and students of the Word, but doing the Word puts a different shape on what it means for us to apply Christian teaching to all aspects of life.¹⁰⁴ Reflective Christian thinking therefore points to ethics. Certainly it is possible to act one way and to think another, but it is not possible to do so for long (Proverbs 23:7). Since one of the goals for helping Christ-followers who become thoughtful Christians involves helping them live with a lifestyle that issues in glory to God, then we must think—and think deeply—not only of personal ethics, but also of the implications of the biblical faith for social, economic, and political ethics.

We need to seek God’s guidance in how we can best contribute to constructive exercises that will help us honor, respect, and love one another. We want to model the love and forgiveness of Christ in relationships, in the home, in church, and in the marketplace. We desire to be quick to offer forgiveness when we have been wronged. At the same time we want to claim responsibility and

seek forgiveness when we have wronged others. We will ask God to help us become agents of reconciliation to a broken and hurting world, which remains in dysfunctional disorder as a result of the entrance of sin into the world. We trust that God will give us grace to be agents of redemption in this broken world and to embrace one another regardless of national, ethnic, or racial background.

Thoughtful Christians (thinking Christians) should also be thoughtful Christians (kind and considerate Christians). Humility, gentleness, love, and kindness are virtues of thoughtful believers. We are to speak in ways that are helpful in building up others. In our actions we are to be kind and loving, reflecting the character of God who has forgiven us in Christ (Ephesians 4:32), resulting in lives that encourage harmony in relationships and sensitivity to the needs of others.

On this foundation can be built authentic Christian communities characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).¹⁰⁵ Divine love issues in interpersonal love, influencing even the most basic elements of life.¹⁰⁶ If we do not show love to one another the world will question the truth claims and authenticity of the Christian faith. Thoughtful Christians need to be convictional, but also civil and conciliatory at the same time. Ultimately the love and grace that has been lavished upon us will lead us to lives of dependence on God and thoughtfulness toward others. With wisdom, humility, and hope, let us recognize that the calling to be faithful and thoughtful Christians involves being ready to provide an answer for the hope that is ours through Jesus Christ the Lord (1 Peter 3:15).¹⁰⁷

IX. Thoughtful Christians Envision Ongoing Service in the Church, to the Culture, and for the World

This central feature of the Christian faith declares that God is Savior, but we fail to understand the comprehensiveness of the Christian faith unless we also see the triune God as Creator, Savior, Sustainer, Ruler, and Judge.¹⁰⁸ This God is calling to himself a people for his name, a people called the church. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ includes men and women who have

responded in faith to the work of the triune God. Thoughtful Christians, in community with other believers, must invest in the church, engage the culture, and serve the world.

1. Church

The church was inaugurated at Pentecost (Acts 2) as God's new society (Ephesians 2:15). It was founded upon the finished work of Christ (John 19:30) and the baptizing work of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). The church was a mystery (Ephesians 3:9-11), was prophesied by Christ (Matthew 16:18), and was revealed at the Spirit's coming at Pentecost. The church was built upon the foundation of Christ's apostles with Christ Jesus himself the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20-21). The church is more than a human organization; it is a visible and tangible expression of the people who are related to Christ. As far as humanly possible, all thoughtful Christians should involve and invest themselves in the visible, organized church of Jesus Christ, and every person in the church should be rightly related to Jesus Christ by faith.¹⁰⁹

2. Culture

Many people today are rejecting the church and the Christian faith, not because they perceive it to be false, but because they believe it is superficial or trivial. People are looking for an authentic and integrated way of seeing life that brings coherence to all of life's experiences—some of which are quite confusing. In many ways, our post-Christian Western culture in general—and American culture in particular—resembles the pre-Christian Athens of Paul's day (see Acts 17), particularly in the focus on the new, the novel, and the world of change as emphasized by the Epicureans.¹¹⁰ Our culture is similarly enthralled by novelty.

C.S. Lewis, in his well-known collection of essays, *God in the Dock*, in which he highlighted the value of classic works, stresses the point that we are obsessed with the new and the novel.¹¹¹ Truth and values in our culture of novelty seem to be of minimal concern or consequence. In the address by the Apostle Paul in Acts 17, we find a model for thoughtful Christians. We learn how to engage culture in meaningful and relevant ways, as well as how to communicate and live this

truth in an effective manner in the midst of an incredibly superficial world.¹¹² The cultural trends that shape much of our world today are similarly influenced by the rise of neopaganism and the various and diverse forms of spirituality.¹¹³ Thus we believe that the Apostle Paul can become an insightful guide to enable thoughtful Christ-followers to respond to this changing post-Christian world in which we live and serve.¹¹⁴

3. The World

Thoughtful Christians live in a world where English is the new common language in most discussions of globalization, but the Spanish language is most frequently spoken by Christians around the world. We live in a context that points to the browning of Christianity and the movement of the Christian base toward the Global South. Christ-followers in the West must be willing to defer to non-Western opinions and ideas whenever our most basic Christian convictions are not at stake. Western wealth and isolation have at times kept us from understanding the real issues of the “majority world” and those in the unevangelized belt. Similarly, we must recognize the importance that social justice plays in understanding and carrying out the mission of God. We need to engage in the serious work that seeks to connect theology, education, justice, and missions together as partners rather than competitors.¹¹⁵

Many Christians, particularly younger believers, comprehend the importance of providing homes for the homeless and food for the hungry. They understand that they are to work for justice while simultaneously taking the good news of the gospel cross-culturally to new areas of the world. We must recognize that we now live in a globally-connected context with new faces representing the various contexts and cultures of our larger global family.¹¹⁶ We must recognize that what brings Christ-followers together is not our homogeneous characteristics, but our deep love for Jesus Christ. Our lives are to become an offering of thanks to Jesus, best expressed in lifestyles of compassion to the least of these in our world.

Thoughtful Christians should assume a posture of humility, listening to and learning from one another. The current climate of fear that characterizes the world around us will likely create a strong challenge, keeping many people from participating in new opportunities. A love for Jesus Christ and a desire to understand others will help to counter this fear, launching exciting global opportunities for the days ahead. We should think not only about international opportunities, but intercultural ones as well. The major cities across the United States now look as if the world has moved to the doorstep of these places.¹¹⁷

Poverty, homelessness, drug abuse, and violence surround us. Our cities are multiethnic and intercultural. We must grapple with our own insulation. We now have the privilege of locally living out the global implications of our faith, joining with others to forge relevant ties for global service. Let us not shy away from this task. Let us ask the Lord to raise up and develop a new generation of thoughtful, committed, convictional and courageous Christ-followers who will go forth in wisdom, humility, and confidence to serve the church, engage the culture, and disciple the nations for the sake of the gospel and the glory of the Triune God.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

We believe that thoughtful Christians, building on the themes that have been amplified in this essay, will joyfully desire to promote faithful Christian orthodoxy, while encouraging intellectual seriousness within this confessional context. We gladly confess afresh our belief that God has revealed himself to us in creation, in history, in our conscience, and ultimately in Jesus Christ (John 1:1, 14-18; Colossians 1:15-18). This God-revealed truth provides the framework for understanding and interpreting the world, the events of human history, and our responsibilities toward God and one another. It is our hope that as we wrestle with the great ideas of history and the new and pressing challenges of our day that the great tradition of Christian thinking will provide both the resources and the examples to encourage our faith and shape significant intellectual pursuits as well as faithful living for the glory of God.

We trust that knowledge informed by faith will lead to an ethic and formation of character that will serve individuals, families, and churches and promote integrity, justice, and generosity. It is our hope that the ideals and commitments called for in this essay will not be seen as culturally confined, for we believe that these matters, particularly the pattern of Christian truth, Christian worldview formation, and a commitment to the enduring authority of scripture, express Christian commitments that cannot be easily expunged without great peril both in the short term and the long term for individual Christians, for Christian organizations and institutions, and for the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the midst of the confused culture that characterizes this secular age, we need thoughtful Christians who exemplify commitments that are firm but loving, clear but gracious, encouraging the people of God to be ready to respond to the numerous issues and challenges that will come our way without getting drawn into every intramural squabble in the church or in the culture. Finally, we trust the Lord to bring renewal to our minds and hearts, providing a fresh wind of his Spirit not only to encourage serious Christian thinking, but faithful Christian living, expanding the work of evangelism and missions, reviving our education and service entities, and doing so in a manner that encourages us to relate to one another in love and humility. We pray not only for a new commitment to serious-minded, thoughtful Christianity, but also for a genuine orthopraxy that can be seen before a watching world. Let us work together with renewed commitments to advance the gospel in new, fresh, and thoughtful ways for the extension of God's Kingdom on earth and for the eternal glory of our great God.¹¹⁹

¹ See the definitions in the *Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English*, edited by Catherine Soanes and Sara Hawker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1078.

² See David S. Dockery, *Renewing Minds* (Nashville: B & H, 2008), 14-15.

³ See Bradley G. Green, *The Gospel and the Mind: Recovering and Shaping the Intellectual Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 11-28; James W. Sire, *Habits of the Mind* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000).

⁴ See Clifford Williams, *The Life of the Mind: A Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 61-71.

⁵ See H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth* (London: Mowbray & Co., 1954).

⁶ See James Emery White, *A Mind for God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006).

⁷ See Dennis P. Hollinger, *Head, Hear & Hands: Bringing Together Christian Thought, Passion, and Action* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005); also see Grant Osborne, *Matthew. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 820-35.

⁸ See Glen S. Sunshine, *Why You Think the Way You Do: The Story of Western Worldviews from Rome to Rome* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009); T. S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* (New York: Harcourt, 1940), 22.

⁹ See James V. Schall, *The Life of the Mind: On the Joys and Travails of Thinking* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2006).

¹⁰ See David S. Dockery, "Shaping a Christian Worldview" in *Shaping a Christian Worldview*, edited by David S. Dockery and Gregory Alan Thornbury (Nashville: B & H, 2002), 1-15.

¹¹ Trevor Hart, *Faith Thinking: The Dynamics of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 1; also Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); Keith L. Johnson, *Theology as Discipleship* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2015), 133-54.

¹² David A. Horner, *Mind Your Faith: A Student's Guide to Thinking and Living Well* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2011); Charles Colson, "Backyard Apologetics: An Interview," *Touchstone* November|December (1999) 44-45.

¹³ Hart, *Faith Thinking*, 11-22; cf. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁴ See *The Creative Theology of P.T. Forsyth*, edited by Samuel J. Mikolaski (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969); cf. Hart, *Faith Thinking*, xiii

¹⁵ See Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*.

¹⁶ See J.P. Moreland, *Love God with All Your Mind* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1997); Arthur Holmes, *Contours of a Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

¹⁷ George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*. Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 474-76; See Richard A. Knopp and John D. Castlelen, editors, *Taking Every Thought Captive* (Joplin: College Press, 1997).

¹⁸ John R. W. Stott, *Evangelical Truth* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 35-110.

¹⁹ See Gerald Bray, "The Challenge to the Mind in Christian Higher Education Today," in *Thinking Christianly*, edited by Paul Corts (Birmingham: Samford University Press, 2011), 57-78.

²⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "Theology and Apologetics," in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, edited by W. C. Campbell-Jack and Gavin McGrath (Downers Grove, InterVarsity, 2006) 35-43; also see David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 84-100.

²¹ Vanhoozer, "Theology and Apologetics," 41; also see Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*.

²² See Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth*.

²³ See Daniel O'Connor and Francis Oakley, editors, *Creation: The Impact of an Idea* (New York: Scribners, 1969); Michael L. Peterson, *With All Your Mind* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame

Press, 2001), 96-100; also see Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993); John Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001).

²⁴ Gerald Bray, *God Has Spoken: A History of Christian Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 188-99; also see Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1984).

²⁵ See Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 98-100; cf. G.C. Berkouwer, *Man: The Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962).

²⁶ See John Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); Anthony Thiselton, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 136-53.

²⁷ See Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995); Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, *Fallen: A Theology of Sin* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013); also, Hans Madueme and Michael Reeves, editors, *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014); Henri Blocher, *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997).

²⁸ David S. Dockery, *Our Christian Hope* (Nashville: LifeWay, 1998), 25-45.

²⁹ Donald G. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*. 2 vols., (San Francisco: Harper, 1978), 1: 181-222.

³⁰ B.B. Warfield, *Selected Shorter Writings of Benjamin B. Warfield*, vol. 2, edited by John E. Meeter (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1973), 427.

³¹ See Thomas C. Oden, *The Transforming Power of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993).

³² See Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012).

³³ See D.A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1999); idem, *The God Who Is There: Finding Your Place in God's Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010); also Kevin

J. Vanhoozer, editor, *Nothing Greater, Nothing Better: Theological Essays on the Love of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

³⁴ P. T. Forsyth, *The Cruciality of the Cross* (London: Independent, 1948), 99.

³⁵ See Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965); John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986); James Boice and Phillip G. Ryken, *The Heart of the Cross* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1999).

³⁶ See Carl F. H. Henry, *The Identity of Jesus* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992); F. F. Bruce, *Jesus: Lord and Savior* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986); Joshua Jipp, *Christ Is King* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).

³⁷ See Graham A. Cole, *He Who Gives Life: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007); Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

³⁸ See David S. Dockery, “The Church in the Pauline Epistles” in *The Community of Jesus: A Theology of the Church*, edited by Kendell H. Easley and Christopher W. Morgan (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 103-22; idem, “Life in the Spirit n Pauline Thought,” in *Scribes and Scriptures*, edited by D.A. Black (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1993), 142-50; idem, “Paul’s View of the Spiritual Life,” in *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, ed. K. J. Collins (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 339-52; idem, “Fruit of the Spirit,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 316-19.

³⁹ See Stott, *Evangelical Essentials*, 85-110; Robert Sherman, *Covenant, Community, and the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015).

⁴⁰ Dockery *Our Christian Hope*, 67-91. While believers differ over these matters, our perspective follows closely the work of George E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962) and that of Darrell L. Bock and Craig A. Blaising, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton: Victor, 1993). See David S. Dockery, “Evangelicals and Eschatology: Learning Faithfulness and Humility

from Craig A. Blaising,” in *Eschatology: Biblical, Historical, and Practical Approaches: Essays in Honor of Craig A. Blaising*, edited by D. Jeffrey Bingham and Glenn R. Kreider (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2016).

⁴¹ See Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*. 6 vols. (Waco, TX: Word, 1976), 2:310-14.

⁴² See Grant Osborne, *Revelation*. Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 726-99.

⁴³ See A. J. Conyers, *The Eclipse of Heaven: Rediscovering the Hope of a World Beyond* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997).

⁴⁴ See Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979); John Gilmore, *Probing Heaven* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989); also Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁴⁵ See Peter Toon, *Heaven and Hell* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986).

⁴⁶ See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd edition (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 1124-39.

⁴⁷ See Robert P. George, *The Clash of Orthodoxies* (Wilmington: ISI Books, 2001); James Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997); idem, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 3rd edition (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997).

⁴⁸ See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); James K. A. Smith, *How (Not) To Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014); also see James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and the Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁴⁹ See discussion of the loss of the sacred canopy, the influence of secularization, privatization, and pluralization, the loss of plausibility structures, and the challenge of cognitive contamination in Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Random, 1967); Peter L. Berger and Anton Zijderveld, *In Praise of Doubt* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009);

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¹¹⁹ It needs to be stressed that the purpose of this article is to provide a guide for “thoughtful Christians,” men and women of any age, but particularly college and university students, who are serious about their Christian faith and the opportunities of service that will be theirs in the changing context of the twenty-first century. The purpose is not primarily to describe evangelical thought leaders who provide leadership for the church and/or academy. For those looking for guidance in this area, see Mark A. Noll, *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2011); Owen Strachen, *Awakening the Evangelical Mind: An Intellectual History of the Neo-Evangelical Movement* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 109-80. Our purposes should not be confused with the recent proposals related to pastor theologians. For helpful insight in this area, see R. Albert Mohler, “The Pastor as Theologian,” in *A Theology for the Church*, 723-28; and, Scott M. Manetsch, *Calvin's Company of Pastors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Neither should our purpose be confused with those who are calling for pastors as public theologians nor those expressing the hope for more public Christian intellectuals. For guidance in these areas, please see Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015) as well as R. R. Reno, “The Christian Intellectual,” *First Things* (www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2013/11/the-christian-intellectual).

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