

## *WJN U. Class Notes*

### *Lesson 2 9/17/13*

I. Often Christians have two kinds of reactions to this kind of study.

They avoid it for a couple of reasons, but those reasons are also what make non-Christians, skeptics, and the intellectual elite blow off Christianity and Christians.

They consider it to be the same as philosophy, which they sometimes think of as atheistic and therefore something they don't need to pay attention to or should even avoid. When that happens, immediately the Christian loses a point of contact with those who are not Christians, particularly the intellectual elite and those in the mainstream media

They think it undermines faith and faith, which is foundational to Christianity – Christians are probably familiar with the verse in Hebrews: "Without faith it is impossible to please God" and "We are saved by faith." HOWEVER:

Those who avoid this kind of study for those kinds of reason wrongly confuse the process of trying to reason our way to God, because we can't, with something being reasonable.

Consider Scripture: We are told in Act 18:4 that in Corinth Act 18:4, Paul "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." But there are any number of verses about Paul reasoning with people.

Paul's sermon to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill as recorded in Acts 17 is another example. Paul certainly didn't mind mixing it up with the philosophers and "intellectual elite" of his day, and we shouldn't either.

Consider alternative: If what we Christians believe is not reasonable, then it must be unreasonable which is another way of saying what we believe is irrational, and that's exactly what a lot of non-Christians and elites in law, academics, and science already think without us giving them even more ammunition to think of us that way.

They forget that all the verses dealing with the mind and thinking. For example, Christians are told in Scripture to:

love the Lord our God with all our mind,

be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Romans 12:)and

They love it because:

It greatly strengthens their faith and increases their boldness. That was certainly true for the Apostle Paul

It encourages them in the midst of hardship and trials: "For which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. I Timothy 1:12. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8: 38, 39

Cautions:

Pride - Knowledge puffs up. We become know it all, better than thou, self-righteous people proud of their intellectual process compared to others who don't believe Christianity

Ungraciousness – Puffed up, prideful people can be very ungracious, argumentative.

Works righteousness. Pharisees - You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life. (John 5:39, 40)

We come to rely on our reasoning, not faith.

Sounds contradictory to the non-Christian

But the way I look at it is that we rely on our reasoning and our intellect

Fowler's story of leaving my law firm in Cincinnati.

Intellect, reasoning would have said to make law partners happy in Cincinnati, make partner, and keep making the big bucks.

But leaving is not unreasonable when you are fully convinced of who God is and who we are in relationship to him.

How do Non-Christians look at the study of Christianity as a way of viewing the world and deciding how to live?

They do not see religion as real or true knowledge about the world, the way things are, at least as to anything relating to the natural world

Most people more likely to say they put their faith in Science and reason.

"Reason itself is a matter of faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all." G.K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy

What has happened in culture is compartmentalization or compartmentalized thinking.

This is critical to appreciate. Here's what I'm talking about, the different ways in which we compartmentalize our lives.

Public sphere vs. private sphere

Facts vs. values

Science v. preferences/values

What does all this mean? What does it look like in practical terms?

Example of Public vs. Private spit: The decision in New Mexico with the husband and wife photography studio.

Court said that there are some rights in your private life you have to give up as part of your public life as a citizen.

Not just that but that whole train of thought comes from a belief that religion is a private matter and not a public matter or value.

This kind of decision is a natural outworking or natural product of the theology underlying First Amendment law today, and make no mistake about it, it is a theology.

Consider the U.S. Supreme Court's 1948 decision, *McCullum v. Board of Education*: [T]he First Amendment rests upon the premise that both religion and government can best work to achieve their lofty aims if each is left free from the other in their respective spheres ...

One way to characterize worldviews is the one M. Night Shyamalan set out in his movie, Signs, with Mel Gibson. It breaks worldviews down into two kinds:

Material View – nature is all there is. This is what philosophers would call “monism” which we’ll talk more about in a minute.

Spiritual View – there is a spiritual dimension

Another way to categorize worldviews for the purpose of evaluating them is the one used by C.S. Lewis in his book, Mere Christianity, and it’s a variation of the M. Night Shyamalan’s worldview categorization. It breaks worldviews down as:

Material view

Life Force, like in Star Wars movie

Religious view. God is a personal God, not just a force

They are categorized in our class textbook, Making Sense of Your World, in terms of what we see as “ultimate reality.” They are:

Naturalism – nature or more specifically some aspect of nature – matter or energy – is the final, ultimate reality.

Transcendentalism – which, in keeping with the concept of nature, some might call non-naturalism. Ultimate reality is not “nature,” but spiritual or non-natural.

Theism – which again, in keeping with the concept of nature, we would call supernaturalism.

A worldview needs to explain several things, but three of those things are

What is ultimate reality but:

What is wrong with the world, such as why do bad things happen (for example, Marxism says the “problem” and discord in society comes from class distinctions)

How do we fix it (what will “save” us)

ften Christians have two kinds of reactions to this kind of study.

A. They avoid it for a couple of reasons, but those reasons are also what make non-Christians, skeptics, and the intellectual elite blow off Christianity and Christians.

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