
A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

The Mind on Fire: Loving God with Your Mind[1]

Melvin Tinker

How are Christians to use their minds for the glory of God? This article proposes that we are to work to love God with our minds because he demands it, our witness is built on it, and Jesus models it.

It is generally assumed that faith and reason stand in opposition to each other and that the use of reason has very little to do with commending or defending the Christian faith. In part this is due to the propaganda of the New Atheists who claim that faith means, "blind trust in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence."[2] It has to be acknowledged that versions of Christianity exist which sit comfortably with the postmodern attitude towards knowledge, with its "hermeneutics of suspicion," whereby claims to objective truth are seen as little more than instruments of power used to impose unwanted views on others. Not surprisingly the temptation to retreat into what is subjective and relative, "My faith is as real as I feel," "Don't question, just believe," will be strong.[3] Also, some Christians have understandably drawn back from what they see as a cold cerebral faith, fearing a new evangelical scholasticism with its emphasis on "getting into the Word" which itself may be an overreaction to excessive experientialism. But a balanced, biblical Christianity calls down a plague on both houses. Developing a Christian mind and using it is not a new form of rationalism—the *sole* use of *reason*—for there is at least one other aspect of the mind which is just as vital, namely, the use of the *imagination* and both are meant to be connected to the *affections*: this is loving God with our minds.[4]

---

[1] This article is a modification of the matriculation address given to the students of George Whitefield College, Cape Town, South Africa, 2016.

[2] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 198.

[3] See Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000).

[4] "I am not for a moment denying that there is an affective element to gospel preaching, or that there is no appeal to the will. Far from it: I insist on both. But the affective element must spring from the play of truth on personality; the appeal to the will must be grounded in content. Gospel proclamation is, in this sense, an intellectual exercise; it is a truth-conveying exercise. There is a battle going on for the minds of men and women; well does the apostle know that in the Spirit empowered proclamation of the whole counsel of God, men and women

The Mind on Fire is the title of a book which contains the *Pensées* of Blaise Pascal who, in 1634, had such an encounter with God that it left him a changed man. The only word he could use to describe the experience was "fire." In his introduction to the 1989 edition, Dr Os Guinness writes: "Can we understand fully what Pascal experienced? Should we expect to duplicate it exactly in our own lives? Emphatically not. But dare we survey the ice-cold minds of countless thinking Christians today and not yearn some discernible fear of the Lord? Some working knowledge of the spiritual dimensions of intellectual warfare? Some irrepressible passion that betrays the fact of a direct, immediate and unquestionable experience of God? In an age when attitudes to knowledge are strung out between technicians and fanatics, between knowledge-eunuchs and knowledge-hustlers, the distinctive Christian mind—sharp, objective, and critical, but committed and worshipping—is all too rare."[5]

Why should we love God with our minds and what might the "mind on fire" look like in practice? At least three reasons can be given.

1. God Demands It as It Is Integral to Our Worship.

There are two passages which pinpoint this truth for us: Matt 22:37 and Rom 12:1–2.

Matt 22:35–38 says,

> One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your *mind*.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

The whole of the Torah, which concerns being rightly related to God—properly worshipping God if you will—"hangs" on these two commands concerning love. While such love is not to be reduced to the affections, it is certainly not anything less. As God is three persons in relationship, so we too are to be other-person-centred. The greatest commandment

---

escape conformity to this world and are transformed *by a renewing of their minds* (Romans 12:2)." D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Leicester: Apollos, 1996), 507–508.

[5] Blaise Pascal, *The Mind on Fire,* ed. James Houston (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), 31.

is taken from one of the cornerstone texts of the Old Testament, the *Shema*, Deut 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." The "heart" in Hebrew thought was the organ of reason and choice and so understandably in Matt 25:37, "heart" is replaced with the word "mind," *dianoia,* which refers to the operation of our understanding, thoughts and imagination. Strictly speaking it is not the mind *per se* which is being referred to but what we *do* with the mind—what we know or desire to know, what we think and how we think, what we imagine and how we imagine. These too are to reflect our love for God as we all as facilitate that love.

There is a tandem relationship between loving God and knowing God. If our affections are to be aroused and properly focused, then a true understanding of God is needed. As our knowledge of God is increased, then our adoration of him is deepened as is our love, which in turn leads to desiring a greater knowledge of him, and so it goes. It is via the mind, however, that such knowledge is grasped. Here are the words of a twenty-year-old C. H. Spurgeon which capture the life transforming effect of "knowing God":

> It has been said by someone that "the proper study of mankind is man." I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master-science, finding that our plumb-line cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise, but he is like a wild ass's colt; and with solemn exclamation, "I am but of yesterday, and know nothing." No subject of contemplation will tend to humble the mind, than thoughts of God …. But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods this narrow globe …. The most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and Him crucified,

> and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.[6]

The centrality of our mind in our worship is further elaborated by the apostle Paul in Rom 12:1–2, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your *mind*. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." The word translated "mind" is *nous*, the *faculty* by which we think, plan and imagine. Paul says that our whole bodies are to be presented to God as a living sacrifice which is our "spiritual worship," and key to this, is the renewing of our minds. If these are not renewed then we simply conform to the world and will not be able to discern God's will. All of this turns on a proper understanding of the nature of our minds, their capabilities as well as limitations.

As far as the secular world is concerned, the basic problem with human beings is that they do not have enough information. Knowledge is key, hence the great stress that has been laid upon education during the last few centuries. Of course, this in part is an outworking of the Enlightenment project summarised by Immanuel Kant as, "That movement by which man emerges from his state of inferiority which makes it impossible for him to use his reason without submission to the direction of others." In other words, we should not be dependent upon other authorities like the church or the Bible, but rather freed from them so that we can have an unfettered use of reason.

The Bible, however, has a far less sanguine view of the human mind than Kant as is evidenced from this passage in Romans. Paul is effectively saying that every person is either being conformed or transformed. The conforming is to the "pattern of this world," that is, a world which is in open rebellion against its Maker. It is a rebellion which is characterised by replacing God at the centre of all things with self, and all that is merely human—human ideas, human values, human aspirations—but humanity twisted by sin. It is the attitude summed up by the statement of Protagoras adopted by enlightenment thinkers such as Kant that "Man is the measure of all things."[7] By way of contrast the Christian is one who through a

---

[6] Quoted in J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (London: Hodder, 1993), 15–16.

[7] "Sinful thinking is 'snake-think', the kind of noetic rebellion proposed by the serpent in Eden. It is diametrically opposed to the mind renewed by the gospel."

transforming of the *mind* is able to "test and approve what God's will is." This phrase is a translation of one word in the original, *dokimazein*. The idea is of "acknowledging, proving or approving something," in this case, God's rule. It is another way of saying we will let God be God. Interestingly enough, the same word is used by the apostle Paul in Rom 1:28 where he describes degenerate practices which result from a refusal to acknowledge God as God: "Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God (*dokimazein*) he gave them over to a depraved *mind*." Here the judgement of God is a surrendering of people to continue their decent into futile thinking which excludes all thoughts of God. The benighting effects of sin on the mind (the noetic effects) and so the limitations of argumentation in commending the Christian faith were recognised by Pascal and need to be considered today when too much confidence can be placed in our skilful apologetics:

> I marvel at the audacity with which some people presume to speak of God. In giving their evidence to unbelievers, usually their first chapter is to prove the existence of God from works of nature. I would not be surprised about this project if they were addressing their arguments to believers, for those with a living faith in their hearts can clearly see at once that everything that exists is entirely the work of the God whom they worship. But for those in whom this light has been extinguished and in whom we are trying to rekindle it, the pride of faith and grace, such people see nature only by this light and find only obscurity and darkness. To such I say that they have only to look around, and they will see in the least of things God plainly revealed. Give them no other evidence of this great and weighty manner than the course of the moon and the planets. If such an argument were to be presented to them, no wonder they would react and say that the proofs or our religion are feeble indeed, and reason and expedience tell me that nothing is more likely to bring it into contempt in their sight. But this is not how Scripture speaks, with its better knowledge of the things of God. On the contrary, it speaks of God as the hidden God, and because nature has been corrupted, he has left men in their blindness. They can only escape from this through Jesus Christ, for without him all communication with God is severed. "No one

---

Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centred Hermeneutics* (Leicester: Apollos, 2006), 60. He goes on to write "This noetic fall, therefore, must be addressed by the gospel if the salvation of fallen human beings is to be complete. The gospel achieves noetic salvation for us through the perfect mind of Christ our Saviour." Goldsworthy, 61.

> knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Matt 11:27).[8]

It is by believing the Gospel—God's self-revelation in Jesus, personally applied by the Holy Spirit—that the transformation of which Paul speaks, the "renewing of the mind," begins to take place. The essence of the renewed mind is putting God back where he rightly belongs as the supreme object of value and authority. John Piper draws on the idea of interplanetary relations to highlight the difference between having God at the centre of our thinking in contrast to his absence,

> It begins with seeing things differently with God at the centre of the solar system of our affections, our attitudes and our words, so that glorious, massive, resplendent reality which is God will exercise his gravitational pull on every piece of our lives. The result is that they come into their proper orbit in relation to one another rather than smashing into one another and ruining everything.

Piper suggests that we think of it like this:

> What would happen if our sun lost its place in the solar system? Well then there would be chaos—you would have Mars spinning off into endless darkness, Saturn's rings starting to crumble, Mercury might fly right into the Sun and there would be bits of the solar system strewn everywhere. It is only because they are rightly related to the Sun that it works.[9]

In Rom 1 Paul is claiming that morally and spiritually this is what has happened to humankind. God is like the sun in the solar system of our lives and if he is removed from the centre of our thoughts then our thinking and behaviour get out of control and soon the whole of society begins to unravel and would do so entirely but for God's grace. However, when a person becomes a Christian, God in his infinite beauty and holiness

---

[8] Pascal, *The Mind on Fire*, 152.

[9] John Piper, "Treasuring Christ and the Call to Suffer, Part 2," (talk delivered at New Word Alive, Pwllheli, Wales, 9 April 2008). http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/treasuring-christ-and-the-call-to-suffer-part-2--2. The basic argument can be found in *Seeing and Savouring Jesus Christ* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2001), 15.

begins to draw their thoughts to himself and consequently things start to be reordered in our lives.[10]

2. Discipleship Requires It as It is Integral to Our Witness.

A number of years ago Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones reflected,

> Looking back over my experience as a pastor for some thirty-four years I can testify without the slightest hesitation that the people I have found most frequently in trouble in their spiritual experience have been those who have lacked understanding. You cannot divorce these things. You will go wrong in the realms of practical living and experience if you have not true understanding.[11]

If we are not thinking Christianly it follows that we will not be behaving Christianly and so will be ineffective in our witness because our thinking will merely be a 'Christianised' version of what the world thinks.

For many years now the West has been subject to the process of secularisation[12] whereby God and matters of faith are pushed further and further to the margins of society until they are deemed irrelevant. If we are to overcome this and reverse it by effective evangelism and social engagement, then we need to take on board what has been described as "Resistance thinking," a term taken from an essay by C. S. Lewis entitled "Christian Apologetics."[13] This is

> a way of thinking that balances the pursuit of relevance on the one hand with a tenacious awareness of those elements of the Christian message that don't fit in with any contemporary age on the other. Emphasize only the natural fit between the gospel and the spirit of the age and we will have an easy, comfortable gospel that is closer to our age than to the gospel—all answers to human aspirations, for example, and no mention of self-denial and sacrifice. But emphasize the difficult, the obscure,

[10] "Christian conversion should lead to sanctified thinking about reality," Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centred Hermeneutics*, 63.

[11] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Warfare* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1976), 114.

[12] Melvin Tinker, "Secularisation: Myth or Menace? An Assessment of Modern 'Worldliness'," *Them* 38.3 (2013): 402–16.

[13] C. S. Lewis, "Christian Apologetics," in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 89–103.

> and even the repellent themes of the gospel, certain that they too are relevant even though we don't know how, and we will remain true to the full gospel. And, surprisingly, we will be relevant not only to our own generation but also the next, and the next and the next …. Resistance thinking, then, is the way of relevance with faithfulness.[14]

This means that it will be the case that, while we will need to apply ourselves with rigour to understanding the Bible, involving not only exegesis but biblical theology, systematic theology, ethics and the like, we will also need to understand our world, its values, assumptions and trends in order to bring the two together in critical engagement, creating what D. A. Carson calls a "culture clash,"[15] thereby exposing the emptiness of present day idolatries and the constant and abiding truth of the gospel.

3. Jesus Models It and It Is Integral to Our Christian Walk.

If we are to walk in the footsteps of Christ (1 Pet 2:21) then we are to follow him at this point in loving God with our minds, both at the level of the rational and the imaginative.

In terms of Jesus' use of logic, it had a particular tenor to it, as philosopher Dallas Willard notes:

> Jesus' aim in utilizing logic is not to win battles, but to achieve understanding or insight in his hearers …. That is, he does not try to make everything so explicit that the conclusion is forced down the throat of the hearer. Rather, he presents matters in such a way that those who wish to know can find their way to, can come to, the appropriate conclusion as something they have discovered—whether or not it is something they particularly care for.[16]

It is worth considering how intelligent Jesus was; not only wise—knowing how to say the right things at the right time in the right way—but actually clever. We can see this as we look at the following examples of Jesus applying relentless logic.

First, he could escape the horns of a dilemma by pointing to a third alternative, known as a *tertium quid*: Luke 20:20–26

---

[14] Os Guinness, *Prophetic Untimeliness: A Challenge to the Idol of Relevance* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 20.

[15] See Carson, *The Gagging of God*, ch. 12.

[16] Dallas Willard, "Jesus the Logician," *Christian Scholars Review* 28.4 (1999): 607.

> Keeping a close watch on him, they [*the Pharisees, Chief Priests and the Herodians]* sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. So the spies questioned him: "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

It seems an impossible dilemma. If Jesus said, "Yes, pay the tax," then he would court unpopularity with the people not only because he would be seen as siding with the Romans but going against years of Jewish teaching and indeed the second of the Ten commandments, "You shall not make for yourself *any* image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath," for there was an image of the Emperor on the coin. The conclusion drawn by the people would have been that he couldn't be God's King, for God's Messiah would not support blasphemy. On the other hand to answer, "No," which is presumably what his opponents were hoping to hear according to v. 20, would bring down the wrath of the Roman authorities as he would be condemned as a political rabble-rouser.

A more helpful translation of v. 25 might be, "The thing that Caesar has made, give to Caesar; the thing that God has made, give to God."[17] Jesus is not sidestepping the challenging question. By answering a question with another question, Jesus is engaging in typical rabbinic rhetoric. The question he raises, and the answer given, was expected to have Old Testament texts behind it to support it, the texts are unspoken but alluded to, such texts as:

Ex 20:2, the second commandment prohibiting idolatry. Jesus was not being nonchalant about the coins in their representation of Caesar's arrogant claim to divinity. But by saying, "The *thing* that Caesar has made, give it to Caesar," Jesus could be being rather contemptuous along the lines, "It *is* an offensive thing, to be sure, but what else would you expect from a pagan, let him have the filthy thing back if he wants it, after all he made it!"

Gen 1:26–27, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'" The coins might bear Caesar's image, the false

[17] See Randall Buth, "Your Money or Your Life," 1990, http://www.jerusalemperspective.com/2449/.

god, but it is human beings who bear the image of the one true God. If Caesar demands his "thing" back because he made it, how much more does God demand back what he has made, namely people? The fact that Jesus' audience would have picked up on this connection is illustrated by a story about Rabbi Hillel the Elder (c. 70 BC–AD 10), the most prominent Pharisaic teacher of the generation before Jesus. In this story, Hillel announces to his disciples that he is going to perform a "mitzvah," i.e., do a good deed to obey a commandment or fulfil God's will. His disciples ask what he plans to do, and he replies that he is going to take a bath. When his disciples wonder how taking a bath can be classed as a "mitzvah," Hillel explains that the Romans made sure that their idols were kept clean and polished; how much more, then, should we take care of ourselves, since *we* bear the image of the one true God?

This would have made Jesus' interlocutors more than a little uncomfortable. They would have been familiar with Ps 96:7–10,

> Give unto Yahweh, you families of the peoples, give unto Yahweh glory and strength. Give unto Yahweh the glory due to his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. O worship Yahweh in the beauty of holiness, tremble before him, all the earth, say among the heathen, Yahweh is King.

While the Jewish leaders may be looking down their noses at the out-and-out paganism of Caesar and his dethroning of God, *they* are guilty of the very same thing. They are not only made in God's image and belong to him like everyone else, but they claim to be Yahweh's special people, and yet are they planning to get rid of Yahweh as their King by getting rid of his Messiah Son who was standing right in front of them (cf. Ps 2). Therefore, if they are to give to God what is God's then they must give *Jesus* their unqualified allegiance; not to do so put them in the category of the wicked tenants which immediately precedes this episode (Luke 20:9–19).

We also find Jesus using what is called an *argumentum a minori ad maius*, arguing from the lesser to the greater. We see this in Luke 11:11 and Jesus' teaching on prayer:

> Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how*

> *much more* will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

The "given" is that even sinfully corrupt fathers would not be so perverse as to give to their children something which will harm them, then how *much more* the perfect Father will give the greatest and most beneficial gift of all, the Holy Spirit, to those who ask him?

Jesus also uses *evidence* in supporting a reasoned argument. Remaining in Luke's Gospel (7:18–35) we have the occasion when John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus asking if he was the promised Messiah and Jesus replies by drawing attention to his own ministry in terms of the fulfilment of prophecy, namely Isa 35 and 62: "So he told the messengers, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor.'" Formally this is known as a *modus ponens* argument: If P then Q; P, therefore Q. The argument formally breaks down as:

> 1. If Jesus does the actions of the Messiah in line with biblical prophecy then Jesus is the Messiah.
> 2. Jesus performs the actions of the Messiah.
> 3. Conclusion: Jesus is the Messiah.

Finally, we have Jesus employing the *reductio ad absurdum*, exposing the absurdity of a position by following it through to the logic of its conclusions. This is illustrated by Luke 11:14–28 and the Beelzebub controversy. Jesus has just healed a dumb demoniac and his opponents attempt to explain away the miracle by claiming that it is by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that Jesus drives out demons. To refute this, Jesus employs the *reductio ad absurdum*. First, he argues, any kingdom divided against itself is ruined. To claim that this is the work of Satan would mean that he is ruining his own kingdom which doesn't make sense (at this stage, v. 18, the alternative is *implied* but not explicitly stated: that it must be of *God* since he is in the Satan-destroying business). Then Jesus presses the point even further, "If I am doing this through the power of Satan, then by what power are your exorcists doing it?" As if to say, "Are they in Satan's employ too? If not, why not? How can you distinguish between what I am doing and what they are doing since the results are the same?" Jesus then draws out *explicitly* the implication of

his actions, namely, that if it is by God's power then the Kingdom of God has come (v. 19).

It is clear from these select samples that Jesus was no shirker in the use of hard-nosed logic and reason and neither should we be. But Jesus was not sparing in the use of the imagination either and the classic instance of this is, of course, his use of parables. The Oxford English dictionary defines a parable as an "allegory, proverb, discourse, speech, talk." Quite properly, the OED references the Greek source for our English word parable, *parabole*, which means "placing side-by-side." In Greek, a parable was a comparison, analogy, or a proverb. While our Gospels were written in Greek, the language of Jesus and his apostles was principally Aramaic and likely to some degree Hebrew. In Hebrew, the word for parable is *mashal*, and in Aramaic it is *mathla*. The Hebrew and Aramaic words come from the verb that means to "represent" or be "like."

It is evident that different parables were designed to achieve different goals. They are not just a means of conveying and eliciting understanding, although some specifically do that, especially the simple similes. But more often than not they are designed to impact the hearers in order to cause them to re-examine themselves and re-assess their values and assumptions. Sometimes the parable has the effect of turning such values and assumptions on their heads as with the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

We may think of parables acting as lenses which, when put on, enable people to see things from a totally different perspective. More often than not through such parables people were challenged to make a choice. This is particularly true of the story parables. In other words, some parables are models of what can be called "subversive persuasion." How do you get through to people who are uninterested or resistant? A straight propositional approach will probably have little impact, especially if the hearer does not share your presuppositions or "plausibility structures." How then do you introduce them to new ways of thinking which would involve getting beneath their defensive radars? The answer is by using parables which are indirect, involving and imaginative. They are *indirect* in that initially the audience can't detect the point being made (in contrast to straight propositions). They are *involving* in that the audience is caught up in the story; they follow the plot line, identify with the characters involved (for good or ill) and are engaged emotionally. Finally, they are *imaginative* as mental pictures are drawn via a form of narrative using the familiar in order to introduce the audience to that which is unfamiliar

with the result that previously held beliefs and values are subverted and a reassessment and re-viewing takes place. Douglas Groothuis writes,

> Jesus' use of parables serves many purposes …. but the epistemological point is that they existentially draw the listener into the drama; they engage the imagination, clear the mind, spark the conscience, and challenge the will. Instead of being third-person discourses, they engender first-person participation …. Jesus tells parables for the purpose of opening his listeners' hearts to the Creator God who acts in history. His teachings call for decision and action. He never left his audience thinking, "That's an interesting idea. But what of it?" The parables are not entertainment.[18]

In relation to Jesus' use of parables, Dallas Willard makes a very important point concerning one of its entailments, namely, *that a commitment to Jesus entails a certain commitment to a certain view of his intellectual abilities*. He writes, "'Jesus is Lord' can mean little in practice for anyone who has to hesitate before saying, 'Jesus is smart.' He is not just nice, he is brilliant."[19]

Resolutions

In the light of all this we might wish to make the following resolutions:

> 1. Resolve to love God with your mind. It is a matter of good stewardship to use the gift God has so generously given you with a desire to hear the words, "Well, done good and faithful servant."
> 2. Resolve to stimulate your mind. Read books which will help you develop a Christian worldview, such as those by Francis Schaeffer, Os Guinness, James Sire, and Charles Colson. Also read books which will take a different position to your own, including those of the New Atheists.
> 3. Resolve to seek out others who will help you develop and use your mind: form a book group or discussion group, but always with the intention of putting things into practice.

---

[18] Douglas Groothuis, *On Jesus*, Wadsworth Philosophers Series (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 56–7.
[19] Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 95.

4. If you have a specialist or professional interest, then resolve to relate that to the Christian faith: science, law, literature, art, politics and the like.

5. Bible teachers, resolve to use reason and imagination with your hearers and, hearers, resolve to use your reason and imagination with your teachers.

Loving God with our minds: God demands it, discipleship requires it and Jesus models it.

MELVIN TINKER is the Vicar of St John Newland, Hull and is the author of *Intended for Good; Mass Destruction: Is God Guilty of Genocide?; A Lost God in a Lost World;* and *Touchy Topics*.