



Developing a Christian Mind

Oliver R. Barclay



A simplified edition in easier English
by Geoffrey Stonier with the author



(Preachers Help International)

CHRISTIAN FOCUS





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ISBN 1-84550-149-7
ISBN 978-1-84550-149-5

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



This revised and updated edition published in 2006
by

Christian Focus Publications Ltd,
Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire,
IV20 1TW, Scotland, Great Britain



First Published in 1960 by Inter Varsity Press

www.christianfocus.com

Cover design by Danie Van Straaten

Printed and bound by
Nørhaven Paperback A/S, Denmark

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From the Editor

When Dr Oliver Barclay first published his book *Developing a Christian Mind* in 1984 through the Inter-Varsity Press, it was a groundbreaking event for Evangelicals. We must surely be grateful for the appearance of this timely book, which not only challenges the Christian's devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, but provides far-reaching biblical reasons for doing so. This book was a major Evangelical contribution to the subject.

Not only that, but the book makes so bold as to provide biblical reasons for a world-affirming view, as distinct from the usual world-denying view of so many Evangelicals. Here, in this book, we find guidance in how we should deal adequately with the world, God's creation ordinance, culture, and a host of related and practical subjects. It takes on the world of scholarship, and exposes the false conclusions that non-Christians contribute to this field, and boldly substitutes a biblical basis for Christian belief and action that immediately strikes us with its authority and authenticity.

Preachers will love this book. It not only covers various themes that naturally develop from the subject of the 'Christian mind', but many Bible passages are closely examined, expounded (explained in order of verses), and applied. Throughout the book, Dr Barclay sees and provides a unity of thought that will benefit preachers and, more importantly, their churches—churches that would





otherwise remain ignorant of a true biblical approach to the world, and thus impoverished in their faith and actions.

Of great importance, the book challenges us not only to strive to make the 'Christian mind' our own, but to use our God-given intellect in applying biblical truth to the practical matters of daily life. Our author is not content just to warm our hearts to the things of God, but makes us think about our wills and minds, and our service for God in the world.

As far as I, the editor and adapter of this book, am concerned, I must admit that it was a tough challenge for several reasons. Dr Barclay was writing for university graduates and undergraduates, and therefore addresses them in suitable scholarly language, a language that is not suitable for pastors in developing countries. For their sakes, I have simplified the English, but have tried hard to keep the correct meaning of Dr Barclay's thoughts. Another problem is that the book was written for students in the First World—that is, Europe and North America—and therefore deals with the thinking of western thinkers, scholars, and research. This is hardly suitable for pastors who live in another part of the world, and in various cultures not necessarily influenced by Western thought. Having travelled widely in India, Sri Lanka, Asia, Africa and Central Asia, I was conscious the book needed to be deculturalised. So large passages of Western thought and illustrations have been cut out or adapted, thus reducing the book by 40%. I hope this will make the book more easily understood and applicable.

At the time Dr Barclay was writing this book, the life of one of the greatest preachers in Britain was coming to an end, who was (and is) known worldwide. His name was Dr David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, whose long ministry at Westminster Chapel, London, was a challenge to all Christians to think carefully through what they believed. More importantly, the Doctor (as he was called) expounded the Scriptures in a way that made Christians think about



their faith, based on what the Bible says. I well remember his challenging sermons on 1 Pet. 1: 12–15:

Therefore gird up your minds, be sober, set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’

He concentrated on the command, ‘gird up the loins of your mind’, urging us to use our minds, and think through our faith in the light of God’s revelation of truth in the Bible. This is exactly what Dr Barclay says in this book.

Finally, I have added an extra section at the end, which gives as simple an explanation of technical words used in the book as I can manage. I hope you will find this helpful.

Geoffrey Stonier





Introduction

Having a Christian mind is important in the New Testament. Of that, there is no doubt. Jesus himself told us to give attention to it. But what exactly is a 'Christian mind', and how does it work in practice? What happens when we try to love God with all our mind, as well as with all our heart and soul and strength? Does it mean that we have to become intellectuals? Certainly not! It will have an intellectual aspect for intellectual people, of course, but I want to show that, in the New Testament, it is something practical and down to earth.

Because our minds are involved in the simplest decisions, the challenge to develop a 'Christian mind' is something we cannot escape, being either obedient or disobedient in the matter. Either we try to please God by loving him with all our mind, or we avoid this responsibility, hoping that somehow a mindless love is good enough. Indeed, every Christian who has been spiritually renewed has, as I hope to show, a new mind to a considerable extent. Our task is to love God with all our mind. It is easy to be inconsistent, and discover a non-Christian outlook controls us more than we realise –often with tragic practical results.

The Christian who refuses bribes, shuns immorality, speaks the truth to his own loss, or makes professional sacrifices to help the poor or preach the gospel, represents the victory





of a Christian mind over our normal self-seeking. He has made up his mind to please God rather than himself.

We must not be misled, either by those who despise a Christian mind and regard it merely as an optional extra for those so inclined, or by those who make it a rarefied affair for academics only. In the Bible, it is for everyone: fishermen, soldiers, workers, tax collectors, philosophers, and religious leaders alike. It applies as much to the uneducated slave as to his educated master, as much to the Greek philosopher as to the Jewish worker on the land.

The plan of the book is as follows: in the first five chapters, I will try to make sure that, in talking about the 'Christian mind' or the 'renewed mind', we are talking about the same idea intended in the Bible, and with the same practical relevance the Bible gives to it. The Bible uses the idea in ways that surprise some people. In the next three chapters, I will develop three areas of application to a greater extent. They are only examples, but they aim to show the way in which the renewed mind enables us to capture more ground for Christ in our lives and in society.

In writing such a book, I am bound to be indebted to many people, sometimes without being altogether aware of the debt. I hope that my friends will recognize themes and ideas that they have either sharpened up for me, or planted in me, and take the credit for what is good in the result. I offer my sincere thanks to them all.

