

BOOK REVIEWS

Barclay, Oliver R. *The Intellect and Beyond*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985. 157 pp. Paperback \$6.95.

The concept of the mind occupies a prominent place in the biblical understanding of man. The understanding of this term has varied. To some interpreters this word is a part of the natural endowments of a rational being, whereas others consider it as meaning logical consistency in thinking, or even academic intellect. To Oliver Barclay, the "Christian mind" is something very different. His *The Intellect and Beyond* is written with the intent of examining the meaning of the expression and of pointing the way in developing the Christian mind. The book is a fine example of bringing difficult subjects to both professionals and laity.

"The Christian mind is not necessarily an intellectual affair," according to Barclay, nor is it merely a capacity for logical reasoning (p. 9). In the first chapter he argues that the Christian mind is even more than a rational aspect of the Christian's day-to-day lifestyle. It is rather a Christian mentality, a proper attitude of mind, a right outlook and onlook on life, a renewed and transformed way of thinking (Rom 12:1-2); it is having the mind of Christ—having one's thought brought captive to him (2 Cor. 10:5). In short, it is a new way of seeing things and then working out the implications.

In chaps. 2, 3, and 4, Barclay attempts to show what the Christian mind can see and how it functions in ethics, doctrine, philosophy, and some other areas. As an illustration, he takes Paul's reaction to the Corinthian tendency to file lawsuits against each other. Instead of immediately telling them what to do or not to do, Paul appeals to their Christian outlook. Six times in the same chapter of his first epistle to them (1 Cor 6), he compares their conduct with what they already know. "Do you not know that we are to judge angels?" (vs. 3): How then does your conduct fit into what you already know?

In ethics (pp. 19-34), this is of paramount importance, according to Barclay. We do not have a complete system of ethics, philosophy, or even theology contained in Scripture, but what we do have is a sufficient number of principles. Sufficient, that is, to a Christian. The Christian is in tune with the mind of Christ and thus becomes able to obey God's will. The Christian will face life and the world with a frame of mind rooted in Christ, and will never expect directions from society in matters of morality. The starting point is always in divine revelation.

In theology, declares Barclay (pp. 35-51), we need Christian minds to understand God's will. There are elements of mystery, insufficient data, and gaps in reasoning in Scripture. Whoever depends totally on a fool-proof system of beliefs will be forced to argue for what is unwarranted or to generalize that which is relative. God did not intend to encourage mental laziness. His revelation molds Christian thinking and thus develops a Christian world-and-life view.

In philosophy, the Christian way of thinking is even more indispensable (pp. 53-66). Purely philosophical approaches are inadequate for so much of human life and nature. No one has been successful yet in creating a Christian philosophy. To Barclay, the Christian approach is theological. As with politics, philosophy cannot be permanently "married" to religion. "We must not be ashamed to admit that there are no clear Christian answers to some philosophical and other problems because they are the wrong questions" (p. 66). Man's questions are theological.

The following chapters in the volume (5, 6, 7, 8) provide illustrations of Christian thinking about man, work, and culture. Some useful and intriguing insights await the reader here.

In his final chapter, Barclay attempts to show how the Christian mind develops. This is, however, the weakest point of the book. It serves more as being a clear summary of previous chapters than an indication of how one's mind grows in Christ. A few hints on this subject are scattered throughout the book, and can be gleaned from the general reading of the various chapters. Included are such items as the following: (1) Reading of Scriptures exposes our mind to God's mind. (2) The Christian mind is "born" at conversion, and from then on it grows as the process of sanctification advances. (3) The exposure to truth as the Holy Spirit influences our minds orients our thinking in the right direction. (4) The application of Christian ethical principles further enriches our experience and thus molds our minds.

This very interesting and readable book warns against anti-intellectualism, on the one hand, and against dry academic pursuits, on the other. One does not need to be a scholar to know how to think in the Christian way. Yet the book leaves some questions unanswered: (1) Is the Christian mind in any way similar to the "inner light" certitude upheld by the Society of Friends? (2) What is the role of church, education, and family in the formation of the Christian mind? (3) Can a non-Christian imitate Christian thinking prior to conversion? (4) Can a Christian do anything to foster the development of a Christian mind?

A major contribution of this book must not, however, be overlooked. At the time when Hellenistic analytical thinking claims identity with Christian thinking, this book can help us remember that we have also Hebraic roots.