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Noetic Sanctification: Using Critical Thinking to Facilitate Sanctification of the Mind

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Introduction

There has been a longstanding battle between faith and reason in theological discourse. This battle vacillated for the last several centuries in the history of the church between Thomistic and Augustinian thinking, and the balance has never satisfactorily been struck. This paper proposes that the academic discipline of critical thinking (CT) can be adapted into other Christian disciplines to help facilitate a process that the theological literature has come to regard as noetic sanctification (Peels, 2011), namely, the sanctification of human cognitive processing. The method of this argument is to utilize CT as a faith-based diagnostic tool to help the believer combat the pervasive noetic effects of sin. Despite a number of authors having previously called for a kind of noetic sanctification to combat these noetic effects (Frame, 1987; Hantla, 2014; Hoitenga, 2003; Moroney, 2000, 2001), to the best of this author's knowledge, no specific model for noetic sanctification has yet been developed. This paper thus proposes four pillars of CT that can be applied in the Christian discipline of noetic sanctification (or "renewal of the mind"): 1) CT is a broad term involving multiple aspects of an individual's approach to the issue and life in general, 2) the education of individuals brings them out of the intellectual development of the classroom to the development of CT dispositions, 3) CT necessitates being conversant with multiple perspectives throughout the process of thinking and learning, and 4) CT involves an intimate awareness of self with respect to assumptions, biases, and motivation.

This paper is constructed as follows: Section 2 offers a brief definition of CT and then draws four applicable syntheses for use in Christian educational contexts. Section 3 outlines a biblical exposition for the noetic effects of sin and then identifies key biblical passages to derive a rationale for noetic sanctification through CT as it is defined in Section 2. Finally, Section 4 applies CT concepts to noetic sanctification as a Christian discipline.

A Brief Review of the CT Literature

The discipline of CT is a much-debated topic in a number of academic disciplines, but three main areas have devoted a large amount of literature to the topic. Philosophy, psychology, and education have extensive amounts of literature devoted to CT and have interpreted years of empirical findings to arrive at some generally agreed-upon definitions of CT within each field. These definitions generally differ within themselves in terms of emphasis, and they differ among these three disciplines in specific terminologies used. This section briefly looks at each of these three disciplines' definitions for CT. Next, some syntheses are proffered to parsimoniously transfer CT into a usable noetic sanctification model for Christian discipleship in Christian education.

Although various discourses differ in terms of their goals for defining CT (See Lai, 2011; and Lewis and Smith, 1993, for definitions from cognitive

psychology; Facione, 1990, for a definition from philosophy; and Haladyna, 1997, Williams and Haladyna, 1982; and Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, for definitions from education), several observations can be asserted in analyzing these three fields' definitions together. First, *CT is a broad term involving multiple aspects of an individual's approach to the issue and life in general*. If the goal of education is to create life-long learners, as has been asserted in voluminous public educational reports and policy statements, then touching cognitive faculties of the student may be sufficient for the immediate assessment of classroom objectives, but it cannot be sufficient with respect to the παιδεύω (i.e., training, disciplining) of children, congregants, students, and counseling subjects (e.g., Acts 7:22, 22:3; Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 2:12). Christian educational leaders have an even more distinct goal in mind: to assist students in cultivating their minds as an act of stewardship with respect to the Great Commandment (See Matt. 22:37 and Moreland, 1997).

Second, *the education of individuals brings us out of the intellectual development of the classroom to the development of CT dispositions*. CT dispositions are more difficult to measure, which makes the field of psychology more reluctant to include this category of CT into what psychologists will actually empirically search for in test subjects; however, each of the psychological criteria Bailin (2002) outlines can be regarded as general attitudes and affective dispositions. In fact, the framers of Bloom's Taxonomy originally conceived of three taxonomies: one for the cognitive domain (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956), one for the affective domain (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1976), and one for the psycho-motor domain (Simpson, 1966). The popularity of the cognitive domain for the educational community eclipsed the other two domains, so much so that the third domain's handbook was only developed by one of the thirty-three framers from the original committee. Education, cognitive psychology, and philosophy generally see CT dispositions as being a holistic conception of the learner both in a classroom setting and in real-life interactions, and these dispositions are integral to achieving these disciplines' respective goals of implementing CT in a number of different contexts.

Third, *CT necessitates being conversant with multiple perspectives throughout the process of thinking and learning*. Others' perspectives are found in all three disciplines' definitions, which makes the goal of implementing CT ecumenically communal. If a learner is unable to "transcend one's self" (Hoitenga, 2003, p. 86), then the situation for CT appears to be rather bleak. Therefore, CT maintains a certain epistemological assumption, namely, that the self *can* actually be overcome, if only partially. Each of these three disciplines agrees that this goal of overcoming self should be duly encouraged. This observation seems to be unique in most secular discourses, especially in light of the popularity of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, in which the attainment of self-

actualization is the highest goal (Maslow, Frager, Fadiman, McReynolds, & Cox, 1970; Maslow & Lowry, 1968). In this way, CT may contribute to a larger awareness of the need to overcome self across multiple discourses; nevertheless, the incorporation of multiple perspectives is specifically developed in this paper with respect to noetic sanctification.

Fourth, *CT involves an intimate awareness of self with respect to assumptions, biases, and motivation*. What Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) (i.e., Bloom's Revised Taxonomy) refer to as *meta-cognitive awareness*, the American Philosophical Association calls self-rectifying human phenomenon; contrarily, other psychological sources note that "in many cases mere knowledge of cognitive biases does not eliminate these biases" (Friedrich, 1996, p. 107). Therefore, even though psychology's definition does not explicitly include self-awareness, a large portion of the psychology literature has been devoted to biases and self-deception, crucial aspects of the two other fields' definitions of CT (For a review of Christian psychologists who have demonstrated this, see Moroney, 2000, pp. 89-114). A number of more recent scholars have taken note of the "social desirability bias" in empirical research (Sedikides & Alicke, 2012; van der Spuy, 2011), which corroborates Moroney's (2000) earlier review. However, Jussim (2012) poses an interesting contrary to these lines of reasoning based on a Constructivist paradigm (pp. 407-420).

These four observations are elaborated upon in the following section with respect to how they can be implemented into a model of noetic sanctification. Here, a theological definition for CT can be assumed to be processes and dispositions that facilitate the Christian's "renewing of your mind" (Rom. 12:22). The next section undertakes a biblical exposition of the noetic effects of sin and what the Bible prescribes to counteract these shortcomings.

A Biblical Understanding of Noetic Sanctification
The Noetic Effects of Sin

This section is designed to introduce some of the major biblical passages pertaining directly to the noetic effects of sin. Then, a word study on a number of passages pertaining to noetic sanctification is conducted. This section is not designed to be a comprehensive examination of the noetic effects of sin, but moving through the aspects of human reason is an essential aspect of this argument, i.e., that Christians can and should utilize CT to facilitate certain aspects of noetic sanctification.

After the fall, the image of God in humankind was totally "polluted" by the effects of sin (Hoekema, 1994, p. 61). This total pollution meant that "no part is free from the infection of sin" (Calvin, 1950), including humankind's reasoning capacity. However, the debate currently surrounding the noetic effects of sin, especially from the Reformed perspective, is not *that* sin affects reason but *how entirely* does sin affect reason. The biblical answer to this question has a number

of consequences in how believers interact (both academically and otherwise) with nonbelievers. For example, Eph. 4:17-24, Rom. 1:18-25, 2 Cor. 3:14-16 elucidate, either directly or indirectly, categories derived from the noetic effects of sin, namely, how sin makes people "darken" their own reasoning capacity to the things of God. Additionally, Rom. 2:1-3 and Matt. 7:1-5 elaborate upon how sinful pride self-deceives human minds, and John 5:39-44 and Luke 24:45 describe how sin restricts humans' ability to see Jesus for who he truly is.

Self-inflicted "darkening"

In Ephesians 4:17-22, Paul admonishes the believers to stop living "as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking" but to "put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires." In his commentary, Wood (1978) notes that "In the NT 'futility' (ματαιότης) is sometimes associated with idolatry, but the primary reference here is to 'good-for-nothing notions' (NEB) underlying irresponsible behavior" (p. 61). Because the church at Ephesus struggled with falling back into old habits, Paul was encouraging them to stop living lifestyles that are passive or ignorant of the calling to which they were supposed to be pursuing.

What is more, the darkness of the Gentile's understanding is one of either willful suppression of a knowledge of God that had been previously been revealed to them or a "hardening of their hearts" by God because God willed that they not recognize His attributes or participate in the good things that come from Him (Eph. 2:12). This "hardening of their hearts" in Eph. 4:18 is said to have caused "ignorance" in the next verse, but as this ignorance is possibly a judicial hardening, it is more likely akin to a willful suppression, such as that which is discussed in more detail in Rom. 1:18-25. This suppression is what Westphal (1990) deems idolatrous because "humans have inserted themselves into the scheme of knowledge as preeminent in authority" (p. 214). He goes on to suggest that "partial suppression of our natural, instinctive belief in God is not to suggest that only unbelievers are subject to the noetic effects of sin; it is rather to claim that in each of us, believer and unbeliever alike, distortions are due to depravity are present but less than total" (Westphal, 1990, p. 214). Westphal's (1990) claims corroborate what Paul was warning the Ephesians about regarding falling back into old negligent habits of thinking and living (Eph. 2:12).

In another section regarding the darkening of the mind such that it is unable to see or know the things of God, in 2 Cor. 3: 12-16, Paul symbolically renders Ex. 34:13, when Moses comes down from Sinai. He does this to elaborate on the fact that the Israelites had willingly suppressed the glory of God in their hearts and minds. Paul notes in 2 Cor. 3:14 that this veil "has not been removed because only in Christ is it taken away," indicating that their hearts were hardened to the full revelation of God. Again, the Israelites had pulled this veil over their

own faces, similarly to how Paul describes the fall of humankind in Rom. 1:18-25 and the Gentile Christians of the church at Ephesus in Eph. 4:17-24.

Sin's self-deception

In an attempt to use the Integrates Model (Carter & Narramore, 1979) to approach contemporary social psychology into his discussion of the noetic effects of sin, Moroney (2000) identifies at least two distinct ways in which social psychology has independently arrived at clear biblical precepts regarding the nature of sin working in the human person. These two distortions are 1) self-serving comparisons – the majority of individual's tendency to "report that we are better than average (an aggregate statistical impossibility)," unless "dissonant with [clear, objective] facts;" and 2) self-serving attributions – an individual's innate ability to "attribute our successes mostly to our own effort and ability (internal factors) [while explaining] our failures as a result of a difficult task or impossible situation (external factors)" (pp. 90-93). However, when we are comparing ourselves to others, our attributions fall in exactly the opposite manner, making our "neighbors" look worse by distortion. This following paragraphs review Rom. 2:1-3 and Matt. 7:1-5 to elucidate where these types of psychological observations manifest themselves in various biblical texts.

Paul's sobering reminder to the Roman church in chapter 2:1-3 negates any believer's self-deception that he may be better than anyone else. In the previous chapter, Paul has just finished laying blame to the Gentiles for intentionally suppressing an inborn understanding that a creative god exists; in chapter 2, Paul sets up a discussion of God's righteous judgment versus humankind's inability to judge righteously due to his own fallenness. Harrison (1976) indicates that the abovementioned self-serving comparison directly impugns an "imagined [Jewish] interlocutor who has absorbed what was said up to this point [in chapter 1] and shows by his attitude that he is in hearty agreement with the exposure of Gentile wickedness" (p. 28). The point of Paul's device here is to make the reader agree with his line of reasoning only to turn the next phase of his argument (i.e., God's sole ability to judge sin in human beings, as in Rom. 2:1-11) back onto the judgmental attitude of the listener. He finishes his point in Rom. 2:3 by saying, "So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?"

I might make one cautionary note about applying this biblical passage (or any passage for that matter) directly to the social psychology's category of self-serving comparisons. Believing oneself to be "better than average" may be arrogant, and the fact that the empirical research bears out this hypothesis is not terribly surprising. However, righteousness, particularly in Reformed theology, does not work on a law of averages. Romans chapter 2 serves to illustrate the self-deceitful Pharisaical practice of holding up their works as a means of "proving" to themselves that they were "righteous," but the true thrust of this passage can be

found in verse 11 and is regarding the fact that Pharisees were unfit to judge both because they were sinful human beings and because "God does not show favoritism" (Rom. 2:11). The fact that the law was being used as a method for determining righteousness as opposed to tutoring the individual toward a realization of his own sin was in and of itself an act of prejudice (favoritism of Jews over Gentiles and amongst Jews, themselves).

Although similar to Rom. 2:1-4, the latter portion of Matt. 7:1-5 calls for a more self-critical attitude than Rom. 2, which calls for a more God-oriented perspective. In verses 1-2, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you," the focus is on the righteous Judge, who has the power and is righteous enough to measure against you the judgment you measure against others. This orientation toward God relates directly with the self-attributing bias of Moroney's (2000) model (Figure 1).
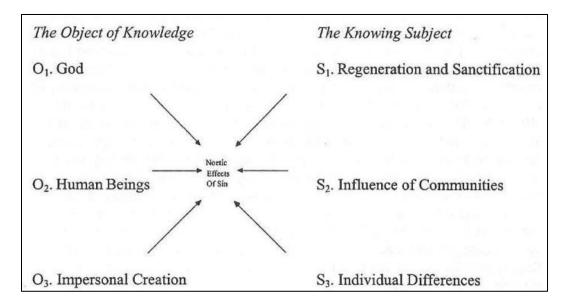

Figure 1. Moroney's (2000) constructive model for the noetic effects of sin (p. 36). The model emphasizes the variability in the dynamic object of knowledge and the variable circumstances and sinfulness of the knowing subject.

However, in the second section of this passage, Jesus illustrates pointedly the communal harm caused by people who regard themselves as more than they ought, similar to Paul warning in Rom 12:3:

> Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank your own eye? [. . .] First, take the plank out of your

own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

In his discussion of knowledge and the noetic effects of sin, John Calvin's "dominant metaphors [were] either auditory (deafness) or visual (blindness)" (Moroney, 2000, p. 4), and Jesus' physical illustration in these verses certainly denotes an inability to see one's self clearly, which subsequently impairs our vision of others. The self-centered cognitive filter that pervades the postlapsarian human person affects not only how we relate to God and whether we attempt to assume his position of authority as judge, but it also affects communal contexts. Certainly, the rather comical community Jesus describes with sticks and logs protruding from their eye sockets serves to keep other individuals at both a physical and emotional distance.

Sin's restriction of revelation

The final biblical discussion of the noetic effects of sin pertains to the inability of nonbelieving individuals to actually comprehend Jesus as the Messiah. The examples in this section are taken from personal interactions Jesus' contemporaries had with him at the moment of either their conversion when their minds were opened or at a moment of rejection when their minds were further hardened against the knowledge of God.

Luke 24:45 presents the instance when Jesus appeared to the disciples after his death, and Jesus asks in Luke 24:38 "why do doubts rise in your minds?" This statement indicates first that the disciples' minds had still not yet been illuminated by Jesus or his Spirit and second that the fallen cognitive functioning relies on empirical assumption more readily than on faith. The fulfillment of meaning in Jesus initial words to the disciples comes in Luke 24:45: "Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures." The event of Jesus' resurrection allowed the disciples' minds to be opened to the Truth that Jesus had been teaching throughout his earthly ministry, but because of the noetic effects of sin at work in the minds of the disciples, they had been unable to comprehend what it was Jesus was actually saying.

Even at this point, interestingly, the disciples could very well have still been relying on empirically founded observations of Jesus in a glorified, post-resurrection state for them to actually understand what Jesus had been trying to communicate about himself all along. Because this is Luke writing these words, the second installment of Luke's account of Jesus' works on earth (i.e., the book of Acts) opens with the illumination and empowerment of the disciples by the Holy Spirit, so this passage in Luke 24 should not necessarily be regarded as the Holy Spirit's illumination. Instead, Jesus' teaching about himself in verses 46-49 finally "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."

At this point, the disciples see Jesus having been raised from the dead and are now ready to hear a clear testimony about him. Notice that Jesus' testimony

about himself in verses 46-49 does not require parables and analogies to communicate meaning to the disciples, so either Jesus supernaturally brought a higher level of understanding to the disciples than what they had previously acquired (which is completely plausible) or the disciples had been primed with empirical evidence that their still-fallen minds could understand. The more straightforward reading of this passage, however, seems to be the latter option, given their doubt when Jesus first starts speaking to them in Luke 24:38. Here, Jesus makes an empirical case for his physical (albeit glorified) presence by having them survey his wounds in verses 39-41, and he proves to the disciples that it is truly him by breaking bread with them in verses 41-42.

The message that Jesus delivers in Luke 24:46-49 is far different than those typically followed or preceded by frustrations Jesus expresses with the Pharisees earlier in his ministry in John and the other Gospels. John 5:39-45 presents Jesus condemning the fallen reason of the Pharisees after they persecuted him for healing on the Sabbath. In verses 37-40, Jesus says,

> And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus clarifies the fact that the Pharisees *knew* a great deal about the Scriptures but that they could not, possibly because they refused to, *perceive* the revelation and fulfillment of the Scriptures in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In this way, the Bible makes it clear that rote knowledge of Scripture, as implemented through works of the Pharisees, could not justify a person. Instead, salvific knowledge only comes from spiritual illumination by the Holy Spirit.

In light of this assertion, i.e., that the mind is insufficient for purposes of justification, the next section examines the significance of the mind in the process of sanctification.

Noetic Sanctification

Moreland (1997) traces evangelical anti-intellectualism through the "rhetorically powerful" preaching of the First and Second Great Awakenings, and although "much good came from these movements," personal conversion was emphasized over the intellectually careful, doctrinally sound preaching that was popular during the time of the Pilgrims (pp. 23-24). Although these movements brought about many social reforms and many people came to know the Lord who previously had not known Him, the negative intellectual ramifications of this movement are still being felt today in evangelical circles in the areas of church

curriculum, world missions, academic discourse, political influence and public policy.

By way of establishing a biblical framework for the discussion of noetic sanctification, this section aims to follow three key words in the biblical text: δοκιμάζω, a word "translated variously as 'test,' 'examine,' 'prove,' 'approve,' and can emphasize either the process of testing or approval that results from testing;" ἀνακαίνωσις and ἀνακαινόω, words meaning "renew" and "renovate," respectively (See Gal. 6:4, Eph. 5:10, 1 Thess. 5:21 and Ess, 2004, p. 104); and φρονέω, a word that is found in Rom. 12:3 and Phil. 2:5 to mean "disposition" or "to be minded in a certain way" (All Greek terms, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the UBS Greek New Testament: A readers edition, Aland et al., 2007). Tracing these terms through the New Testament elaborates upon the principle of noetic sanctification, or God's willingness "to restore his image in us, so that the functioning of at least some of our noetic faculties is partly repaired. In this way we can, for instance, acquire knowledge of God which otherwise we would not have" (Peels, 2011, p. 393). A discussion on the image of God in Eph. 4:23 concludes this biblical exposition section.

As a brief excursus, this section examines CT as a principal component of noetic sanctification, but it is important to keep in mind that Paul and other biblical authors had no knowledge of the twentieth century educational concept of CT. The method employed in this paper – i.e., to transfer the contemporary educational practice of applying and enforcing CT in the university classroom setting – differs from previous attempts to incorporate CT into theological contexts (Ess, 2004, pp. 75-110). The type of application this paper calls for with regard to CT is contextualizing subjects within a biblical framework. Therefore, this section elaborates upon a number of passages that relate CT very closely with firmly established biblical principles. Additionally, the educational, psychological, and philosophical communities have only recently begun emphasizing these principles in their academic disciplines. This section in no way attempts to claim that the biblical texts anticipated CT as an educational concept, but it does attempt to synthesize CT concepts with true biblical principles, not the other way around.

Testing

In looking at CT as a potentially beneficial component of noetic sanctification, a number of different passages play into the idea of testing and approving both oneself and the ideas of others. First, the notion established in Galatians 6:3-4 relates to the testing of oneself: "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. Each one should test (δοκιμαζέτω) his own actions." This Greek term here comes from δοκιμάζω, which means "to test," but it can also mean "reliable," "esteemed," and in reference to Jesus, "rejected [by man]" (Kittel & Friedrich, 1985, pp. 181-182). Applied to self-critical

examination, the believer should be willing to declare himself less worthy than he originally perceived himself to be. However, as seen in the previous section on the noetic effects of sin, the Pharisees used their actions as a way of showing themselves to be *more* righteous than their hearts showed them to be and, woefully, even of Jesus. Therefore, Gal. 6:3-5 (especially the portion of verse 4 that discusses taking "pride in himself *without comparing himself to somebody else*") discusses being judgmental against oneself, whereas Gal. 6:1-2 discusses being compassionate and reconciliatory with regard to the sin of others. Again, as in Matt. 7:3-5, if a person is critical of others but not himself, he is culpable to an unhealthy level of arrogant, legalistic pride. The corporate aspect of this text emphasizes reconciliation with God and each other as the guiding hermeneutic for judging or "testing."

Eph. 5:10 emphasizes the corporate works aspect of trying to discern that which is pleasing to the Lord: "and find out (δοκιμάζοντες) what pleases the Lord." In this regard, working with a corporate body of believers in a local congregation is critical to spiritual growth and accountability. In a related manner becoming aware of the field of discourse in an academic context may prove to be just as critical in noetic sanctification. This point can be related to the abovementioned third conclusion drawn from the common definition of CT: *CT necessitates being conversant with multiple perspectives throughout the process of thinking and learning*. The exchange of ideas, due to both our limited finiteness and to the pollution of sin, can serve as a constant method by which Christians discern rightness and wrongness in the realms of biblical scholarship and life experience. The process of sanctification must involve "finding out" together how to best please the Lord as Christians.

Again, in 1 Thess. 5:21, Paul discusses the idea of testing, but this time, he discusses the testing of prophecies and charismatic gifts expressed in the corporate worship of the Thessalonian church. Robert L. Thomas notes that this congregation had probably been "soured" toward prophecies due to the false claims of "idle" brothers (Here, verse 14 is referenced with an inherent reference to 1 Thess. 4:11, R. L. Thomas, 1978, p. 12). However, Paul's call to "test (δοκιμάζετε) everything" (5:21) is a call to theologically discern, "with a proper view of Jesus as the Christ and Lord […] whether another prophetic spokesman has given a genuinely inspired utterance" (R. L. Thomas, 1978, p. 292). In addition to the immediate context regarding charismatic gifts and corporate ordinance, this passage can be more generally applied in terms of holding "on to what is good," as Rom. 12:9 advises, and should be regarded by the church body as a method of corporate noetic sanctification. Applied corporately, this is a process of discerning theological and cultural practices in the local church body (See Vanhoozer, Anderson, & Sleasman, 2007).

Renewal

The primary verse typically referred to in terms of "renewal" (ἀνακαίνωσις) is Rom. 12:2: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind ([or "undergo renewal of the mind"] ἀνακαινώσει τοῦ νοός), then you will be able to test and approve (δοκιμάζειν) what God's will is–his good, pleasing and perfect will." Here, Harrison (1976) punctuates this verse as an introduction to one of the duties of Christian living and that "only an intelligent commitment of life in the light of God's gift of salvation will suffice" (p. 126). The mind should be "transformed" in accordance with God's will in the same way that Christ was transformed (literally "*metamorphoô*," but the same word is used for *transfigured* and *transformed* in the NIV; Mark 9:2, 3) after refusing "Satan's solicitations in the temptation" (Harrison, 1976, p. 128). The critical life of the mind in these verses is such that the believer should constantly keep under examination his presuppositions and assumptions and should be "self-critical" (Ess, 2004, p. 90) in his analysis of what he thinks (as well as how those thoughts manifest themselves in actions through his will).

The next usage of this root, ἀνακαίν, is seen in its verb form, ἀνακαινόω, in 2 Cor. 4:16: "Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed (ἀνακαινοῦται) day by day." The passive voice in this verb indicates that renewal is something that happens to us, presumably from God. However, being passively renewed does involve an active participation on the part of the subject of renewal. The connection, then, with Col. 3:10 is necessary to elucidate fully the meaning of this word. Col. 3:9-10 reads "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed (ἀνακαινούμενον) in the knowledge in the image of its Creator." This participial usage denotes a continual renewal of the new self, i.e., a life-long process of sanctification. The same is true in this case of the "putting on" and "putting off" of the new and old selves, respectively. The middle voice of the verbs used to describe the putting on and off of the two selves may indicate that believers do play an active, volitional role in this process; however, the passive voice of the renewing of this new self denotes that something is also happening external to the subject's actions.

The active part of this equation for the believer is verse 9's call to "stop lying (μὴ ψεύδεσθε)," which is slightly different than the NIV's "do not lie" because this version could be misconstrued to mean that they were not lying to each other to begin with regarding the things of God. The passive aspect of receiving renewal, then, is consequent to speaking the truth and acting in accordance with the holy things of God (i.e., verses 5-8). In both of these verses, Rom. 12:1-2 and Col. 3:9-10, the critical thinker is being called to discern what God's will is and what the truth is, respectively. The New Testament writers did

not anticipate CT as it has come to be regarded in our current education, philosophical, and psychological systems. However, they did not need to know the term to be able to apply and suggest skills that are parallel to and complementary of skills related to CT. The New Testament refers to skills in terms of both the individual practice of acquiring an *intimate awareness of self with respect to assumptions, biases, and motivation* and the corporate practice of *being conversant with multiple perspectives throughout the process of thinking and learning* (See Section 2 of this paper).

Disposition

In his critique of social psychology for "missing the mark" for how social psychologists prescribed a solution for self-serving cognitive distortions, Moroney (2000) calls for "Christian social psychologists [to] move beyond mere descriptive studies which document noetic errors to creative experimental investigation into the possibilities and mechanisms for guarding against and reducing our self-serving biases" (p. 99). The social psychological prescription was "to help people develop cognitive illusions so that they can think more positively about themselves, the world, and the future, employing the mildly inflated biases that normal people characteristically use" (Taylor, 1989, p. 220), an obvious contradiction to the scriptural command in Col. 3:9 to "stop lying to each other." Instead of solely searching for an experimental solution from social psychologists, however, it seems more appropriate to integrate psychological practice into the work conducted by educators, as it has traditionally been done, in Christian classroom and church congregational settings. The previously articulated goal of *the development of CT dispositions* is more apt to handle the development of CT dispositions in students and congregants.

For a biblical discussion on CT dispositions, the root verb φρονέω assists us in understanding how Paul views the type of disposition a Christian ought to have. To build on an earlier discussion of Rom. 12, verse 3 puns on φρονέω in three different ways to illustrate 1) how people generally regard themselves (ὑπερφρονεῖν, literally to have a "hyper" arrogant disposition), 2) how people should regard themselves (σωφρονεῖν, to be "sound of mind" and "marked by restraint or modesty as distinct from *hybris*" and "sober devotion" (See Kittel & Friedrich, 1985, pp. 1150-1152)), and 3) to arrive at this mindset by simply thinking wisely (φρονεῖν, "to think or to plan" or "[to counsel] sober aspiration" (Kittel & Friedrich, 1985, pp. 1278-1279)). The verse reads, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought (μὴ ὑπερφρονεῖν), but rather think of yourself (φρονεῖν) with sober judgment (σωφρονεῖν), in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

In reality, the disposition Paul is calling the Romans to adopt is one of humility, which is one reason why this section started with an elaboration on the noetic effects of sin. Although Moroney identifies the ironic, "self-referential

implications" of a reasoned approach toward discussing the effects of sin on human reason (Moroney, 2000, p. 82), the passage from Romans is a sobering reminder that any academic discipline "is a product of the finite and fallible reason of man. Its understanding of the Christian revelation is never complete, as we saw, and its expression in rational terms of what it does understand is never perfect" (G. Thomas, 1951, p. 55).

One final note on Rom. 12:3 is its relatedness with the punning of φρονέω in verse 16: "Live in harmony with one another (ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες). Do not be proud (ὑψηλὰ φρονοῦντες, literally, "do not adopt a proud disposition") [. . .] Do not be conceited (φρόνιμοι παρ' ἑαυτοῖς, literally, "do not be wise in and of yourself"). This string of puns on the root verb φρονέω, begun in 12:3 and rounded out in 12:16, reminds the church at Rome to live in a community, to not show favoritism to people of high position or great intelligence, and to have a right perspective of one's own capabilities in light of sin, finitude, and God.

The next verse related to the proper "mindedness" of the Christian, which falls in line with the disposition of a proficient critical thinker, is Phil. 2:5: "Your attitude (φρονεῖτε) should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Here, Paul goes on to describe at length the disposition of Christ, as in Phil. 2:6-11, that Christians should be continually aspiring after. In verses 3 and 4 of this passage, Jesus is described as considering "others better than [himself]," and always looking "to the interests of others;" therefore, to apply this biblical concept to CT, the disposition of a critically thinking Christian should be humble, in full awareness of his own fallenness, finitude, and knowledge of his model and maker, i.e., Jesus Christ. The critically disposed Christian always longs for the day, as in Eph. 4:13, "when we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

In closing this biblical exposition section, the renewal aspect of Eph. 4:23 has already been addressed, but exactly what is being renewed still garners some attention. First, Paul is principally concerned with one aspect of the "new self," which in verse 24 the Christian continually "puts on." The word Paul uses touches on an aspect of the image of God in fallen human beings that receives quickening at justification and requires constant renewal through sanctification; in fact, Paul uses two words in Eph. 4:23 to illustrate exactly what renewal means at this point in the text: "be made new in *the attitude of your minds* (τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ νοὸς ὑμῶν, literally "the spirit of your minds")." Paul seemingly combines two traditionally separate aspects of the image of God in this one verse to illustrate what sanctification truly involves. The type of holistic perspective expressed in Paul's combination of "spirit" (πνεύματι) and "minds" (νοὸς) necessitates a well-rounded approach to removing the "pollution of sin" in the human person throughout the gradual process of sanctification (Hoekema, 1994, pp. 149-150). Noetic sanctification is one aspect of this renewal, so to incorporate CT into a

model of spiritual disciplines seems to be a harmonious approach to allowing God to renew the mind, especially, in addition to the body, soul, and spirit.

<center>**Applications and Implications for Practitioners**</center>

In conclusion, some applications need to be made in regard to how noetic sanctification plays out in a real-world context. These applications derive precisely from the previously outlined characteristics of CT from the disciplines of philosophy, psychology, and education. In the following sections, italicized words are quotations from the previously stated syntheses among the various perspectives of CT (See Section 2 of this paper).

Scaffold Lesson Plans

First, the fact that *CT is a broad term involving multiple aspects of an individual's approach to the issue and life in general* means that noetic sanctification can best be derived from Moroney's (2000) constructive model of how sin affects human cognition (Figure 1). This model considers previous epistemological models (Brunner, 1946; Kuyper, 1954; Pratt, 1979, pp. 24-25) but extends them into the complexities of a real-world knowing subject in order to situate the complexities of a real-world context – whether that context is in a church, a school, or in a counseling office. In other words, students must be considered complex creatures made in the image of God who have multifaceted backgrounds and are influenced by a wide array of factors (See Figure 1), all of which affect their decision making and learning processes (Van Brummelen, 2009, p. 43). Educators must consider these legion influences when developing lessons; the best way to do this is to include time at the beginning of every lesson to help students express their personal contexts and (mis)apprehensions surrounding the subject matter (Collier & Dowson, 2008; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). For example, when setting up a lesson on a literary concept such as a "symbol," open the floor for discussion surrounding this word in order to gauge the students' levels of understanding on the term. The answers will vary widely depending on whether a lesson is planned for primary, intermediate, or secondary settings or whether the school is parochial or public, urban or rural.

Because the discipline of CT is aware of the dynamic natures of the knowing subject and the real world, the variability of each issue requires consideration in approaching a given problem. The effects of considering all of the factors contributing to an identified error in thinking may rest on any one of Moroney's (2000) identified issues (Figure 1), or the error may derive from a combination of factors, thus allowing for a deeper level of critical analysis. If an educator can identify the error in thinking early in the process, or if he or she can help a learner identify their own errors in thinking (i.e., metacognition), there is greater likelihood that a student will formulate a proper conception of a topic moving forward (Kryjevskaia, Stetzer, & Grosz, 2014). Especially when approaching the topic of God and human persons who bear his image, a thorough

knowledge of the complexity of our own thinking in addition to the complexity of the dynamic object of knowledge (e.g., God) enriches our understanding of theological enquiry and allows for a more informed teaching and learning process.

Focus on the Whole Person, Not Just Cognitive Skills

Second, *the development of CT dispositions* runs parallel to the goal of a Christian educator, minister, or counselor. Although knowledge in and of itself does not effect change, knowledge should humble a knowing subject to the point where adopting "the mind of Christ," as in 1 Cor. 2:16, or where "the spirit of the mind," as in Eph. 4:23, can be moved through the will to the point of "renewal," such as what Paul describes in Rom. 12:2.

Unfortunately for educators, developing dispositions is not always part of the school's goals, especially for educators in public educational settings. However, it is incumbent on Christian educators and institutions alike to focus on the spiritual development of their subjects. One example in which Christian educators often relate to concepts of CT is in the area of cultural criticism (For examples on how to do this effectively, see Ess, 2004; Vanhoozer, Anderson, & Sleasman, 2007). The process that a teacher takes a student through in a cultural criticism exercise helps students become more aware of the world around them and the influences vying for their attention and allegiance on a daily basis (Vanhoozer, Anderson, & Sleasman, 2007).

Explicitly Recognize the Value of External Perspectives and Danger of Personal Bias

The third and fourth pillars are closely related: noetic sanctification requires *being conversant with multiple perspectives* as well as *an intimate awareness of self with respect to assumptions, biases, and motivation*. Thus, the idea of multiple perspectives in academic discourse is generally implemented through research paper assignments and in developing lectures. In my personal experience teaching composition courses for years in a theological institution, many Christian students are not even aware of how to cite a variety of Christian authors in their papers to develop a cogent argument. A primary tenet of sound argumentation is the inclusion of valid secondary sources; however, I frequently grade papers that only include notes from the MacArthur Study Bible or from their favorite Christian authors. Thus, *being conversant with multiple perspectives* likely includes people who disagree with us,

Nevertheless, with the ever-increasing amount of information being curated on the Internet, I would also like to see lessons on information literacy added for the curriculum of 21st Century learners, especially in Christian educational settings (Pessia, 2014). One scholar who practices a deep level of cultural awareness in the way he runs his Christian perennial school is Robert Littlejohn. In his book, Littlejohn (2006) discusses the difference between "inoculation" and "quarantine" with regard to private education (p. 125), and in

his Christian school, he brings in speakers from varying faiths and cultures to speak during the school's chapel time. After the chapel service, the faculty host a guided discussion on the topic presented and answer questions that the students might have after hearing the lecture. This is an excellent practice for Christian institutions who believe that "all truth is God's truth" (Gaebelein, 2009) to situate the perspectives of their students in a real-world context so that when students leave the school, they are able to discuss these matters with non-Christians in an informed, prepared manner.

Fourth and finally, noetic sanctification requires *an intimate awareness of self with respect to assumptions, biases, and motivation*. This level of human reasoning is clearly articulated in Bloom's Revised Taxonomy under the category heading of meta-cognitive knowledge and is regarded as the most abstract form of human reasoning (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Although theologians have not widely recognized this concept in Christian education, applying meta-cognitive awareness in noetic sanctification is essential for rooting out biases from personal, sinful, cultural, and erroneous theological standpoints. On the one hand, these biases can be seen positively, in terms of presuppositions, and in this case, identifying a presupposition may help a student understand better the position of a certain writer. On the other hand, unobserved biases may turn negative, such as the case of prejudice. The Bible consistently warns against prejudice and favoritism within the Body (e.g., Jam. 2:3-4, 9; Deut. 1:17; Lev. 19:15; Prov. 24:23; Acts 10:34; Gal. 2:6), and unless a person is aware of their own biases in approaching a subject matter or a life situation, they will be blind to its presence, thus sinning without knowing it. CT calls for a critical evaluation of biases and presuppositions for arguments specifically, but noetic sanctification may utilize this in terms of Moroney's (2000) identified cultural sins (pp. 29-30, 38-39).

Thus, the best application of this pillar in educational context is with the use of a writing or CT rubric (Kelly-Riley, Brown, Condon, & Law, 2001; Rhodes, 2008). I have been on a number of committees that have developed rubrics, and have seen great improvement in students' written products when an institutional writing or CT rubric is used consistently across a number of different classes (Akin et al., 2012; Hantla, 2014). Educating students on what personal bias looks like in a paper and then grading them on their understanding and application of this concept is a practical way in which educators can demand excellence and deep levels of CT from their students (Kelly-Riley, Brown, Condon, & Law, 2001).

Conclusion

Contrary to what some have claimed regarding CT (Elder & Paul, 2010; Nosich, 2012; Paul & Elder, 2007), noetic sanctification is not a discipline that can be undertaken by individual Christians in and of themselves. Employing faith over reason, through a process that this paper calls *noetic sanctification*, requires a

supernatural humility and reliance on God to illuminate faults and shortcomings at the deepest levels of human cognition. Because of the pervasive effects of sin on human cognition, it would be folly to suppose that humankind could, by itself, develop a deep meta-cognitive awareness, receive wisdom from multiple perspectives on a topic, adopt the "mind of Christ" through a CT disposition, or gain understanding on the multifaceted nature of the world, human nature, and theological inquiry. In short, "his illumination [is] the eye of the mind by which we are enabled to see" (Calvin, 1972, p. III.4). Therefore, CT can and should be used to help discipline the mind of the believer, but noetic sanctification can only be achieved through the strict reliance on the Holy Spirit for guidance in the fallen areas of human reasoning that require divine restoration.

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