

Psalm 94:11

The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

In his commentary on Psalm 94, Augustine states concerning v. 11, “Abandon therefore the thoughts of man, which are vain: that ye may take hold on the thoughts of God, which are wise.”

This germ of an idea required refinement, for Augustine’s expression carried the subtle implication of the correlativity of the thoughts of God and the thoughts of Man. That is, he suggested a dynamic of interplay between them such that it was necessary to “abandon” the one in order then to “take hold on” the other.

The refinement of Augustine’s idea occurred at the behest of the Reformation. We see it in that well-known expression that usually is attributed to Johannes Kepler, that Man must “think God’s thoughts after Him.” Kepler was a contemporary of Calvin, both of whom worked in the generation following Luther. He was a scientist, particularly an astronomer, and this phrase of his often is cited as evidence that the origins of Modern science are steeped in Christianity.

Though nominally Christian, Kepler exhibited serious divergence from Orthodoxy. He held more of a Deist conception of God. For him, to “think God’s thoughts after Him” related specifically to study of the motions and attributes of the heavenly bodies. His ideal was that in gaining an understanding of the nature and function of Creation, one thereby comes to think as the Creator thought. In his conception Man may pull himself up by the bootstraps of his own scientific inquiry to attain the thought of God. Whereas Augustine would have us to turn away from the thoughts of Man and to choose instead the thoughts of God, Kepler would have us to build up our thoughts until they become the thoughts of God, or at least become the equivalent of the thoughts of God.

The phrase “think God’s thoughts after Him” acquired its truest meaning via the fully Reformational doctrines of God and of Man. The Reformational ideal was best carried into the 20th Century by Van Til, who made liberal use of this phrase. He explains, for example:

“The system that Christians seek to obtain may...be said to be analogical. By this is meant that God is the original and that man is the derivative. God has absolute self-contained system within himself. What comes to pass in history happens in accord with that system or plan by which he orders the universe. But man, as God’s creature, cannot have a replica of that system of God. He cannot have a reproduction of that system. He must, to be sure, think God’s thoughts after him; but this means that he must, in seeking to form his own system, constantly be subject to the authority of God’s system to the extent that this is revealed to him.” [A Christian Theory of Knowledge, p. 16]

Contrary to Augustine, to think God's thoughts after Him does not mean that we attempt to empty the human mind of human thought. Contrary to Kepler, it does not mean that human thought ever can become the equivalent of Divine thought. In its truest sense, to think God's thoughts after Him means that human thought must endeavor to align analogically with Divine thought.

Kepler might have approached more closely to this ideal except for his focus upon natural science. He was concerned mainly with the natural laws of the operation of the Universe. However, the thought of God is not principally subsumed in natural law, but is devoted to moral law. That is, the question of what should occur in the created order is not basically a matter of the natural forces or energies that may bring anything about, but a matter of the righteousness or unrighteousness of what comes to pass. We see this most dramatically in examination of the biblical terms.

Thoughts are expressed in words. In the Bible the Word of God is synonymous with the Law of God. God's Law not only is morally regulative, but is God's exercise of critical thought. Indeed, the ancient Greek root of our term *critical - krisis* - is the basic New Testament term for the "judgment" of God. Kittel gives the sense development of the term as: *estrangement, conflict, decision, judgment, verdict*. Before any critical thought can take place, one thing must be distinguished from another. In the very beginning God distinguished light from darkness, the waters above from the waters below, dry land from ocean, etc. It is important to emphasize that He did not *observe* these distinctions, but *created* them. Men do not create such distinctions, but rather are charged to observe them. This is what Van Til means by saying that God's thoughts are *original*, and in contrast that Man's thoughts are *derivative*.

With the introduction of sin into the created order, distinction now often results in conflict. Some elements of distinction are to be apprehended and some are to be shunned. Critical thought requires first distinction and then selection or decision. This leads ultimately to judgment and verdict. As predicated of God in the New Testament, *krisis* often has an emphasis on the negative consequences for those condemned by judgment. For example, Hebrews 10:27 warns that willful sin gains only a "terrifying expectation of judgment (*krisis*)." However, the reality of judgment as condemnation is fixed by the priority of judgment as righteousness. The critical thought of God principally establishes righteousness and consequently condemns those who are in violation.

The exercise of Man thinking God's thoughts after Him also is expressed in the New Testament. In John 7:24, Jesus exhorted the multitude who sought to kill Him, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment (*krisis*)." The multitude's judgment was unrighteous because it was based upon appearance, *i.e.*, how things seemed to them. In contrast, righteous judgment is based upon the standard of righteousness in the Word, the Law, the Judgment of God. Righteous judgment judges God's judgments after Him. Also, James spoke in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:19), "Therefore it is my judgment (*krino - via krisis*) that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles." James did not, like Augustine, vacate all personal judgment in order to pronounce God's judgment; nor did he, like Kepler, pronounce his judgment as identical to God's judgment. Rather, he spoke in righteousness as one who thinks God's thoughts after Him.

We also see human *krisis* more generalized. Referring not to a particular judgment, but to the exercise of critical thought generally, we read of the noble Bereans

in Acts 17:11, who, "...received the word with great eagerness, examining (*anakrisis*) the Scriptures daily..." The prefix *ana* denotes "up" or "again," and has the sense of multiplying the root. So, for example, *analogy* (*analogos*) signifies that our understanding of one thing is built upon our understanding of another. The word (*logos*) comes back around in our minds and understanding is built higher. In this case *anakrisis* is a superlative indicating that judgment is built upon judgment. Taken by itself, this term might have been applied to the multitudes Jesus confronted in John 7:24, who doubtless built judgment upon the judgment of their own experience of things. What made the Bereans' *anakrisis* noble was that theirs was a judgment focused directly in the Scriptures.

We might select another prefix that would incorporate directly into the term the needed element of alignment with God's thoughts. We might consider for example the preposition *para*. This is a very general preposition that has a wide variety of uses. It can mean "along side" in the sense of "with" and also of "against." The sense is determined by that to which it is joined and by the usage in context. For example, Luke reports (1:3) that his account of the life of Christ was compiled after his "...having investigated (*parakoloutheo*) everything carefully from the beginning..." The term *koloutheo* essentially means "to follow." The prefix *para* adds the meaning of "following closely," or perhaps "following after."

Utilizing the prefix *para* in the Luke 1:3 sense, we might apply it to *krisis* in the Acts 17:11 sense in order to derive a term that embodies in itself more directly the ideal of thinking God's thoughts after Him. A translation of *parakrisis* might be "aligned judgment," and would carry with it the implication that all proper creaturely *krisis* will be undertaken to align with *krisis* of the Creator. God pronounces ultimately creative, and therefore original, *krisis*; Man ideally pronounces analogically derivative *parakrisis*. This term is outside the lexicon of Revelation, but in that case becomes its own example of its meaning. Thinking critically after the pattern of God's judgment, the human mind derives terms in which to express the truth of his experience.

Such a term may never come into popular usage. Nor, indeed, may it ever gain currency as a technical term of philosophy or theology. However, the foregoing explains the grounds for coining this term to serve as the name of a new publishing venture:

parakrisis publications

and the name of an accompanying Internet Web Domain:

www.parakrisis.com