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Conducted by  
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**“Would you please explain 1 Cor. 2:16. What is the difference between the ‘mind of the Lord’, and the ‘mind of Christ’?”**

**I think it would be helpful to quote 1 Cor. 2:16; it reads, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”**

#### **THE CONTEXT**

In 1 Cor. 2, Paul contrasts the world’s wisdom with the wisdom of God. He asserts, **“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory”** (v7). This ‘wisdom in a mystery’ was the revelation of God concerning Christ, as he makes clear in Eph. 1:9,10. None of the princes of this world discerned this for, Paul says, **“Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”** (1 Cor. 2:8). He makes it clear that the natural man of the world could not have known these things because they are ‘spiritually discerned’, and he is indicating here that in general the world is spiritually ignorant. Therefore, the spirit which permeates the world results in a wisdom which decrees that to preach Christ is foolishness, but it is precisely this kind of ‘foolishness’ which God has used in order to make the revelation of His mind to mankind concerning salvation. So we see man’s wisdom at variance with God’s wisdom, even to the extent that man was willing to crucify the Lord of glory in order to demonstrate to God how ‘foolish’ He really was. This sets the scene for us to explore the mind of God in more detail.

#### **THE MIND OF THE LORD**

This, of course, is ‘the mind of God’. The Greek word used for ‘mind’ is **NOUS**, and indicates purpose, and counsel(s). We understand, of course, that the purposes and counsels of God are *His* exclusively. The mind of God is unsearchable by man.

Isaiah made this plain in O.T. times, **“Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him”** (Isa. 40:13, but read from v12 to v17). How can the *created* teach anything to the Creator. The clay hath no power over the potter; he either discards it if unsuitable, or works it according to his desire. Because God is God, natural, created man must always be inferior to Him; as Isaiah says again, **“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”** (Isa. 55:8,9).

We are left with the very definite idea that God, in His dealings with man down the ages, has revealed to man only those things which He wanted him to know, and which were for his good. This revelation has been considerable, of course, and is contained in the Book we call the Bible; but even though considerable, it is by no means *everything*. God’s express purpose has been that man should be saved from sin, and He has counselled people all down the ages to this end. His ultimate revelation was in His Son, and in His Son He revealed Himself to the extent that His love, compassion, grace, and power were quite evident to all. He spoke His thoughts *through* His Son, as He had done through others in earlier days. In doing this, He made it clear that even though there are many blessings *laid out* for us here on earth, there are many more delights *laid up* for us in Heaven, and since we cannot search His Will, we have little knowledge of the *extent* of the delights which His Almighty Power can bring into being: remember, He created the heavens and the earth with a *word*, **“Let there be light, and there was light.”** He spoke, and it was done. *He* did not use any cosmological machine in order to further His Divine Will. He is GOD, and may we never forget that: Isaiah didn’t, **“For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for him”** (Isa. 64:4). The most amazing thing to me, though, is that the Christian, *while here on earth*, can begin to plumb the deep things of God. The in-dwelling Holy Spirit is our Mentor and Counsellor; listen to Paul again, **“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God”** (1 Cor. 2:11). In v10 he says, **“The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”** That Holy Spirit in-dwells *us*, dear brethren. Let us listen to His promptings.

Therefore, we must conclude, I believe, that man, with his considerable scientific knowledge, is yet strictly limited in his knowledge of cosmic reality. Stephen W. Hawkin, in a recent book entitled “A Brief History of Time”, propounds a concept know as ‘Theory of Everything’, as a theory in which all of space and time are unified. He reaches a conclusion like this, and I quote, “We shall all . . . be able to take part in the discussion of why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason – *for then we should know the mind of God.*” Unquote. This desire of man to know the ultimate reality – the mind of God – is thought to be the end of human reason, bolstered by the all-compassing benefits of scientific knowledge, no doubt. But I seem to recall that this glittering prize was dangled before Adam and Eve in the Garden, **“then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil”** (Gen. 3:5). Perhaps man’s aspirations in this respect are like the Alchemist’s dream of turning base metals into gold and silver. Anyway, God has said that it can’t be done, and for the Christian that should be the end of the matter, irrespective of the multitude of mathematical equations that man may advance for knowing the mind of God.

### THE MIND OF CHRIST

In view of what I have said regarding God revealing Himself in Christ, the reader may ask, “Well, what should be so different about the mind of Christ?” I have tried

to point out, with the aid of Scripture, that the mind of God is so vast and unknowable, that man will never apprehend the full scope of it by natural and scientific means. On the other hand, Christians are exhorted to *have* the mind of Christ. **“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,”** Paul writes to the saints at Philippi (Phil. 2:5). This is essential for the well-being of the Church, as Paul explains, **“that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind”** (2:2). If the Church follows this directive, then it will be permeated by the mind of Christ, and not by man.

It is the mind which determines our attitude to life and to other people. If we are asked to have the same mind as someone else, then that mind must be an exceptional one: in the case of Christ it was, and is. If we are exhorted to *have* the mind of Christ, then we must be able to achieve what He achieved; not in the sense of being able to be the Saviour of the world, but in our attitude to life in general. I like the words of J. B. Phillips on Phil. 2:5, “Let your attitude to life be that of Christ Jesus himself. For he, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to his privileges as God’s equal, but stripped himself of every advantage by consenting to be a slave by nature and being born a man.” Oh! how often we try to *elevate* ourselves rather than humbling ourselves. How difficult we find it sometimes to give up some little thing, and yet *He* gave up the joys of Heaven quite willingly. Furthermore, what about obedience? Sometimes, it seems to me, we have the strange idea that when we were obedient to the terms of the Gospel in Baptism that this is all that God requires of us. Obedience is on-going all through our lives. Christ procured our salvation, and in doing so He was expressly carrying out the plan of God, obedient to it in every sense. Don’t we Christians realise that by having the mind of Christ we have become extended instruments in God’s glorious plan for mankind? Listen to Paul again, **“continue to work out (at) your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and do what pleases Him”** (2:12,13 N.I.V.).

The mind of God, and the mind of Christ. In the first case unsearchable in its eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient power; in the second case, revealed in all its quality, sincerity, and glory, so that we can be partakers of it to the continuity of the Church, and the glory which should be attached thereto. Brethren, we should marvel that God has conceived this great plan for the salvation of mankind, and privileged that we should be instrumental in furthering it.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,  
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