Mentality and Idea of Optimism: Analysis of Christian Optimism

Exordium:

On November 18, 1559, at one of the most critical moments in the history of the Scottish Reformation, John Knox sent two letters to England. The first he addressed to Sir William Cecil, chief secretary of Queen Elizabeth, setting forth very clearly the Scottish Protestants' need for English help, coupled with a serious warning of the danger in which both countries stood at the moment from the threat of French and Roman Catholic attack. The second letter he dispatched to Mrs. Anne Lock, a Protestant lady and member of his former congregation in London. In this communication, while speaking of the Protestants' difficulties, he assured her that all was well, for they would eventually conquer by divine favor and power. The two letters seem to be almost contradictory, and scholars wonder how he wrote them both on the same day.

In the present day, Christians are forced into similar situations as John Knox. Specifically, they are put into situations where they are required to make judgments about the world. These judgements are of the utmost importance as they shape a Christians' worldview. Thus, it is important for Christians to make accurate conclusions and perceptions about the world and the way they should live life. However, this is often difficult for Christians, as there are many opinions on the best way to pursue life.

Narratio:

Perhaps the main problem behind this struggle for Christians, is that there is evil and wickedness plaguing the world. We are constantly bombarded with sinful ads commercials, and varying lifestyle choices are being expresses in society. Additionally, there are events which occur regularly throughout the world that reveal the wickedness of this world. Natural disasters like earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis, which destroy everything in its path and create suffering for all that are affected. Issues like murder, rape, and theft damage peoples' relationships, hearts, and minds. There are never-ending threats of nuclear war, terrorism, and mass shootings, which cultivate fear and terror into the souls of many. This sinfulness of the world muddies the waters and hinders the Christians ability to view the world correctly.

When deciding how to view the world, there are three main mentalities to consider. The first of these is pessimism. Pessimists are people who tend to focus on the darker aspects of a situation or event and as a result, expect a negative outcome. Those who tend toward pessimism may also feel helpless and believe that any actions taken are unlikely to have an impact on a negative outcome. They may believe themselves to be passive agents in the world and largely attribute any chance of success to external factors that cannot be controlled.

Pessimism is seen in the media regularly. A classic cartoon character that many people recognize and identify as a pessimist is Charlie Brown. One of Charlie Brown's famous quotes describes his pessimist personality. "I'm afraid of being happy because whenever I get too happy something bad always happens." Here, Charlie Brown describes the attitude of the

pessimist. He fears being happiness because it never seems to last. While he longs to be happy, Charlie Brown ultimately believes that he will never achieve this goal as bad things occur the moment, he decides to be happy. This is exactly how a pessimist thinks. Despite terrific things occurring in their lives, pessimists believe that dwelling on the good is pointless. They believe that life is full of suffering and by dwelling on the good, one is living an unrealistic lifestyle. Furthermore, pessimists' dwell on the bad things in life simply because suffering is more likely to occur than happiness or goodness. By having this state of mind, pessimists think that the suffering in life is manageable. Clearly, Charlie Brown's quote shows the attitude of a pessimistic lifestyle as he dwells on the negative effects of life as opposed to the positive.

Another mentality people encounter is realism. Realism attempts to illustrate life without romantic subjectivity and idealization. It focuses on the actualities of life, and truthfully treats the commonplace characters of everyday life. The purpose of using realism is to emphasize the reality and morality that is usually relativistic and intrinsic for the people as well as society. This sort of realism makes the readers face reality as it happens in the world, rather than in the make-believe world of fantasy.

This idea of realism is seen in literary works. In Pride and Prejudice, Jane Austin expresses this idea of realism by exploring the financial aspects of marriage. Specifically, she does this through the character of Charlotte Lucas. Essentially, Charlotte assesses marriage rationally as a financial matter and is willing to marry a fool, Mr. Collins, simply because of the financial security and status he offers. Additionally, she describes herself as unattractive and an 'old maid' who is unlikely to attract a romantic hero that will sweep her off her feet. Thus, she settles for Mr. Collins because he is the most realistic of options. Charlotte embodies the idea of realism because she sees things the way they are presented. Charlotte assess the situation rationally and chooses the most reasonable and realistic solution, given her circumstances. For these reasons, Austin's Pride and Prejudice, portrays the character of as Charlotte as a realist.

Thirdly, people encounter the mentality of optimism. Optimism is defined by Donald Whitney as, "the tendency to expect the best possible outcome or to dwell on the most hopeful aspects of a situation." Optimistic people tend to have more positive thoughts, be more hopeful, and view the future in a positive light. Optimistic people find more enjoyment in life and are usually more pleasant to be around because they refuse to worry about things they cannot control. Additionally, optimistic people have hope, defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as, "someone or something on which hopes are centered." For the optimist, hope is the foundation for all his beliefs and dreams. Despite everything occurring in life, the optimist clings to this hope and makes all his conclusions about life as a result of this hope. For most optimists, this hope is placed in lesser gods, such as karma, denial, the "universe," or intentional ignorance.

This idea of optimism is seen in society regularly. Perhaps the most apparent place this idea is expressed in is Disney movies. Disney is known for its optimistic characters such as Dory from Finding Nemo, Rapunzel from Tangled, and Bert from Mary Poppins. However, the most recent optimistic character from Disney is Olaf from Frozen. In his song, "In Summer" Olaf sings the creed of the optimist, "When life gets tough, I like to hold on to my dreams." Even though his dream involves sunshine and he is made from meltable snow, Olaf truly believes that he can achieve his dream. Furthermore, Olaf is optimistic in the face of adversity and manages to say the right thing in a terrible situation: "Some people are worth melting for." Olaf indeed embodies the concept of optimism.

Clearly, Christians encounter mindsets like pessimism, realism, and optimism in their daily life. Whether it be in the media or the attitude of another person, these mindsets are present everywhere. Because of this, it makes sense that Christians are often conflicted about which mindset they themselves should follow in their everyday life. Ultimately, Christians need to know which mindset to pursue. These mindsets provide a foundational basis for the decisions Christians make in their everyday life. Thus, the Christian must choose a mindset to follow.

Partitio:

Ultimately this paper will show that for the Christian optimism, is realism. To prove this, I will first show that once the gift of salvation is accepted, the Christians future and the ultimate source of optimism and hope is secured. Secondly, I will explain that because this perfect future is a reality, the Christian should turn to this source of optimism for help with regards to make accurate judgments during times of struggle. Finally, I will show that during these times of struggle, the Christians should feel blessed because times like these are when the greatest rewards are revealed.

Confirmatio #1:

Once the Christian accepts the gift of salvation, his future and the ultimate source of hope is secured, and this is our source of optimism. One of the most essential elements of the Christian doctrine as well as the Christian optimist is Jesus' work on the cross. Scripture teaches that Jesus left the riches of heaven to become a man and deliver us from our sins. This is seen in Matthew 20:28 which says, "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." This verse makes it very evident that Jesus wanted to not only save His people but to serve them by ultimately dying on the Cross. This idea of Jesus wanted to serve His creation is discussed in 2nd Corinthians 5: 21 which says, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." In this verse, Paul is telling Christians everywhere that God sent Jesus, an innocent man to die for all of humanity.

To be forgiven of their sins, Christians must recognize this act of salvation and repent. 1st John 1:9 makes this claim clear. It reads, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." As indicated by this verse, upon asking for forgiveness, the Christian will be cleansed from all his sins and have a fresh start with Jesus in his life. Additionally, Job 33 explains that once Christians accepts and repents, "their flesh will be renewed like a child's" and they will "be restored as in the days of their youth." As a result of this newfound energy, "that person can pray to God and find favor with him, they will see God's face and shout for joy; he will restore them to full well-being." This verse shows that once a person allows Christ to come into his life, a change in lifestyle is evident.

Upon repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ, Christians are assured a place in Heaven. The famous John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." As indicated by this verse, the Christian has hope since he is guaranteed a place in Heaven. This is the Christian's source of optimism. Acts 4:12 then furthers this idea saying, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." This verse indicates that the Christian has hope in something which is greater than himself. The

Christian’s source of optimism comes as a result of the gift of salvation which comes through God. Thus, the Christians must life his life in a manner that is pleasing to God, since He gave the Christian a real hope for life. In summary, once the Christian accepts the gift of salvation, their source of optimism is found in the hope that they will have a place in Heaven.