

THINK BIBLICALLY!

RECOVERING A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

GENERAL EDITOR

JOHN MACARTHUR

WITH

THE MASTER'S COLLEGE FACULTY



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PREFACE

In keeping with the mission of The Master's College to empower students for a life of enduring commitment to Christ, biblical fidelity, moral integrity, intellectual growth, and lasting contribution to the kingdom of God, this volume has been written to instruct and exhort all those who will eventually read this material to embrace a Christian worldview. Without apology or reservation, The Master's College is committed to the absolute authority, centrality, inerrancy, infallibility, primacy, and sufficiency of God's Word. Thus Scripture is by far the single most important source that informs and shapes our view of God and His created world.

Think Biblically! targets students and nonstudents alike. In an era of postmodern influence that advocates that there are no absolutes and that everyone's opinion is of equal value, this volume issues a serious call to recover a Christian worldview that is absolute and exclusive. As many individual believers, conservative evangelical churches, and Christian schools drift away from a high view of God and His Word, their worldview will be compromised by error. These essays are intended to reaffirm and restore a biblically-based view of life's reality from God's perspective; some of the content is intended to be prescriptive and some proscriptive. Whether the reader is a student in high school or college, a pastor or professor, a missionary or biblical counselor, a layperson or Christian worker, this book will help refocus proper attention on God's understanding of the world in which one lives.

This volume is not intended to be an unabridged treatment of the subject. For instance, the explanations of and defenses against other worldviews have not been included.¹ Further, no single chapter exhausts its subject but rather furnishes a suggestive, general treatment. Each chapter could have been expanded into a full-length book. Also, additional disciplines could have been treated had space permitted. However, the broad sweep of this presentation is its intended strength.

This work is divided into two major sections. Part One presents "The Biblical Foundation," which deals with six major ideas that frame the basics of a Christian worldview, including a special emphasis on the Gospel of Jesus

Christ. Part Two illustrates "The Biblical Formulation," in which many, but not all, of the more important contemporary outworkings of a Christian worldview are representatively and briefly treated.²

The reader will also note a diversity in the levels of style in treating the different topics. At one end are chapters whose documentation is extensive, and at the other are those in which documentation is minimal. To some extent, this diversity results from the nature of individual subjects, and to a lesser degree, the choice of each contributor. Even though the reader might perceive a minor difference of opinion, The Master's College Faculty is unanimously and wholeheartedly committed to a biblical worldview as presented in Scripture.

Each chapter concludes with a Further Reading section. These resources are listed as representative of the best volumes to pursue should the reader wish to further explore the subject matter of any given chapter. The inclusion of a work does not constitute an endorsement of everything in that work but reflects a favorable impression of its general thrust.

The endnotes provide additional information and cited documentation for the worldview literature in each chapter. An Index of Scriptures, an Index of Persons, and an Index of Subjects provide a ready reference. Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

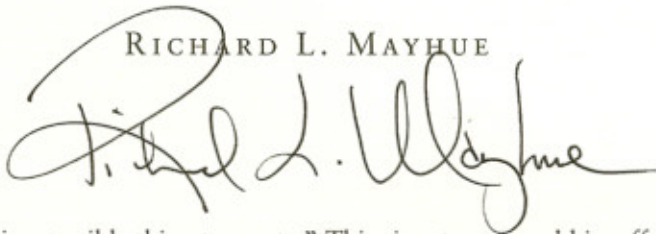
The editors wish to thank many individuals who have assisted in the production of *Think Biblically!* Librarians John Stone and Dennis Swanson helped locate valuable resource material and references; administrative assistants Marjorie Ackerman, Sharon Staats, Tanya ten Pas, and the faculty secretaries worked on various portions of the project; Dr. W. Gary Phillips and Bob White read the manuscript and offered helpful improvements; Phil Johnson and Gary Knussman helped with several chapters; and various TMC colleagues made valuable suggestions while reading preliminary chapter drafts.

The Master's College faculty offer *Think Biblically!* with the simple prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ will be pleased to encourage this generation of Christians and the next to interpret the world around them with a Christian worldview because they possess "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16).

John MacArthur
Richard L. Mayhue
John A. Hughes

CULTIVATING A BIBLICAL MIND-SET

RICHARD L. MAYHUE



A mind is a terrible thing to waste.” This signature sound bite effectively calls to mind a prominent college-level scholarship foundation.¹ Most, if not all, worldviews would embrace this generally accepted aphorism. However, a great divergence of opinion exists in describing what this waste might involve, how extensive it is or can be, how best to prevent this kind of mental resource loss, and what might be the best methods of renewing a damaged or neglected mind.

This chapter builds upon the fundamental idea that a human mind that 1) is redemptively focused on Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord (Rom 8:5-8) plus being renewed regularly by Scripture (Rom 12:2) and 2) is then receiving a quality education (formal or informal) from the perspective of a Christian worldview will be the mind that achieves the greatest gains and experiences the least waste (Ps 119:97-104). While the foundation’s classic slogan, mentioned above, embraces the intellectual side of life only, a Christian worldview considers both the intellectual and spiritual aspects of humanity as inseparably and integrally connected from the beginning.

When God created Adam and Eve (Gen 1–2), He brought them into existence in His own image (Gen 1:27) with a mind that immediately allowed them to think, communicate, and act (Gen 2:19-20; 3:1-6).² The Creator desired that His creation love Him intensely with the mind (Matt 22:37; 2 John 6). Thus, the intellectual and spiritual dimensions were linked in the creation of humanity and in God’s will for them.

Proverbs 27:19 establishes a basic axiom relating to the individual character and mind of a human being.

*As in water face reflects face,
so the heart³ of man reflects the man.*

Thus, who Adam and Eve were to become would depend in some measure on how they thought. This basic idea also appears in Proverbs 23:7, "For as he thinks within himself, so he is" (NASB). Jesus used this truism in Matthew 15:18-19 to illustrate that man sins, not because of what he eats physically, but because of what he digests intellectually. A person who thinks righteously will tend to act righteously, and conversely a person who thinks sinfully will act sinfully as a habit. Both the factual and ethical dimensions of one's thought life greatly determine one's behavior. This same principle is generally recognized in the cultural proverb:

*Sow a thought, reap an act.
Sow an act, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.*

One becomes intellectually and spiritually what he/she thinks. So, unquestionably, the mind is a terrible thing to waste because to waste a mind is to waste a person.

Physiologically speaking, the brain is central to human existence and identity. The human race is uniquely set apart from all other aspects of creation by being created in the image of God and by the capacity to think profoundly and then live wisely. Who could imagine that the three-pound human brain—comprising one hundred billion neurons and that handles ten thousand thoughts daily, regulates over 103,000 heartbeats every twenty-four hours, coordinates over 23,000 breaths a day, and controls over six hundred muscles—would also play such a central role in determining the nature and value of our lives? Yet this is exactly what Scripture teaches in Romans 8:5: "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit."

THE MIND HAS ALREADY BEEN WASTED

Long before the twentieth century statement, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste" had been penned, the human mind had been seriously ravaged. A focused reading of the Pauline epistles locates numerous references to the human mind that indicate it had been severely damaged shortly after God's creation in Genesis 1—2.

This shocking discovery can best be grasped in the following list of twelve

different negative New Testament words that describe the ruin of man's intellectual capacity.

1. Rom 1:28 "debased"
2. 2 Cor 3:14 "hardened"
3. 2 Cor 4:4 "blinded"
4. Eph 4:17 "futility"
5. Eph 4:18 "darkened"
6. Col 1:21 "hostile"
7. Col 2:4 "deluded"
8. Col 2:8 "deceived"
9. Col 2:18 "sensuous"
10. 1 Tim 6:5 "depraved"
11. 2 Tim 3:8 "corrupted"
12. Titus 1:15 "defiled"

As a result of this mental mayhem, people are "always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim 3:7), and some even "have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom 10:2). This represents the most tragic expression of a wasted mind.

Now, this does not mean that humans have been intellectually reduced to the mental ability of animals. It does not suggest that humans cannot achieve at an extraordinary level—for example, a Nobel or Pulitzer honoree. It does not preclude brilliant works of art or spectacular scientific discoveries or even an unprecedented acceleration of societal sophistication such as in the past two centuries. It does not mean that there cannot be a Mensa-level (top 2 percent) of intelligence. It does not mean that individuals cannot perform any good deeds at all or live according to some set of moral values.

But what then does it mean? Before giving a response to this vital question, it would be best to inquire: What happened, and why was the human mind wasted?

HOW WAS THE MIND WASTED?

At the completion of creation, "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). Adam and Eve were in righteous fellowship with God and had been given dominion over all of God's creation (Gen 1:26-30). A life of earthly bliss described their potential future and that of their offspring before sin entered the picture.

Genesis 3:1-7 describes the far-reaching and devastating blow to the human mind that would affect every human being who lived thereafter. Without question, Satan waged war against God and the human race in this

monumental passage where the battlefield turns out to be Eve's mind. In the end, Eve exchanged the truth of God (Gen 2:17) for the lie of Satan (Gen 3:4-5), and the human mind has never been the same since.

The empirical method in primitive form actually originated in Genesis 3 when Eve concluded that the only way she could decide whether God was right or wrong (after Satan had planted seeds of doubt about God's truthfulness in her mind—Gen 3:4) involved testing Him with her own mind and senses. Paul explained it this way in Romans 1:25, speaking of those who would follow on the spiritually perilous path of Eve and then Adam: "they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator."

In short order, Eve basically bought into the lie of Satan and believed that she had a choice. Either she could disobediently choose to eat or she could obediently choose to refrain. Eve believed that she alone could determine the best choice with her own mind; God's command was no longer authoritative. God's verbal revelation no longer dictated what was right and what was wrong in her life. God's authoritative instruction became optional because all of a sudden, thanks to Satan, there now were other alternatives.

"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate" (3:6). Here one finds the first historical practice of empirical research and inductive reasoning in its infancy. In the first act of human rebellion, Eve decided to conduct three tests on the tree in order to see whether God or Satan was right.

So she subjected the tree to these tests, the first being that of physical value. She observed the tree, and in examining it she saw that its fruit was "good for food." It had nutritional value. These might have been Eve's thoughts: *Maybe Satan is right. Maybe God was over-restrictive in preventing me from having all of the joy of life and all of the fruit in the garden.*

Based on this positive response, she ran a second test. Eve realized that the fruit was "a delight to the eyes." Not only would it benefit her body nutritionally, but she also discovered that it had emotional or aesthetic value. She gazed upon it and found that it was "a delight to the eyes." Putting this into postmodern language, she felt good about looking at the tree.

Eve wasn't satisfied yet. She wanted to be thorough. Perhaps she thought, *I'll take it one step further.* Then came a final test. She looked and saw that the tree was desirable "to make one wise." It had intellectual value that would make her wise like God.

In the midst of Eve's deliberation, she saw and thought that the tree really

was good. It met her needs physically, aesthetically, and intellectually. Her mind drew the inference that God was wrong or that God had lied; Satan's deceit had successfully lured her away from God's absolute and unchanging truth. The human mind was about to be wasted forever. Being deceived led to disobedience, for Eve rejected God's instructions, took from the tree's fruit, and ate. Adam quickly did the same (3:6).

Paul summarizes Eve's disastrous act this way: "But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (2 Cor 11:3; cf. 1 Tim 2:14). The seduction of Eve's mind by Satan's deceit and Adam's blatant disobedience resulted in the corruption of their souls and, as a result, the souls of all humans who would follow (Rom 5:12).

Thus the human mind was wasted by sin. Man's mind was so debilitated that fellowship with God proved no longer humanly possible, and the ability to see and understand life from God's perspective vanished. The human race was now estranged from its God and Creator.

As a result, God's original two created human beings, and every one of their offspring, experienced a brutal reversal in their relationship with God and His world.

1. They no longer would concern themselves with thoughts of God, but with the thinking of men (Ps 53:1; Rom 1:25).
2. They no longer would have spiritual sight, but were blinded by Satan to the glory of God (2 Cor 4:4).
3. They would no longer be wise but foolish (Ps 14:1; Titus 3:3).
4. They would no longer be alive to God, but rather were dead in their sins (Rom 8:5-11).
5. They no longer would set their affections on the things above, but on the things of earth (Col 3:2).
6. They would no longer walk in light, but rather in darkness (John 12:35-36, 46).
7. They no longer would possess eternal life, but rather faced spiritual death—i.e., eternal separation from God (2 Thess 1:9).
8. They would no longer live in the realm of the Spirit, but rather in the flesh (Rom 8:1-5).

CAN THE MIND BE RECLAIMED?

After the fall of Adam and Eve, followed by God's curse on them (Gen 3:16-19), their minds still functioned, but not at the same superior level as before.⁴ Before the Fall, Adam and Eve held the mere potential to sin; they possessed a full-blown inclination to sin after the Fall. Their lives were now cursed rather



What we think shapes who we are. That's why the Bible tells us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2a). In a world of differing voices competing for our allegiance, we must learn to "think biblically" so we can distinguish good from evil. God is the Creator of this world; His voice—His Word—must guide our thoughts and our lives.

With the Bible in their hands, John MacArthur and other scholars and teachers from The Master's College confront the false worldviews that dominate our postmodern world. The authors provide models for cultivating a biblical mind-set on worship, psychology, gender, science, education, history, government, economics, and literature. This book will prove to be helpful to anyone striving to *Think Biblically!* in today's culture.

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