

# THINK BIBLICALLY!

RECOVERING A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

GENERAL EDITOR

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WITH

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*Think Biblically!*

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# INTRODUCTION

**W***eltanschauung*.<sup>1</sup> What is it? Everyone has one. It colors the way all people interpret life. It triggers the decisions one makes, not to mention driving one's responses. It comes in many varieties. Philosophy, science, culture, and/or religion generally make the dominant contributions to it. What is it? It is the personal *worldview* of each living individual.

What is a worldview? A worldview comprises one's collection of presuppositions, convictions, and values from which a person tries to understand and make sense out of the world and life. "A world-view is a conceptual scheme by which we consciously or unconsciously place or fit everything we believe and by which we interpret and judge reality."<sup>2</sup> "A worldview is, first of all, *an explanation and interpretation of the world* and second, *an application of this view to life*."<sup>3</sup>

How does one form a worldview? Where does one begin? Every worldview starts with *presuppositions*—i.e., beliefs that one presumes to be true without supporting independent evidence from other sources or systems. Interpreting reality, in part or in whole, requires that one adopt an interpretive stance since there is no "neutral" thought in the universe. This becomes the foundation upon which one builds.

What are the presuppositions of a Christian worldview that is solidly rooted and grounded in Scripture? Carl F. H. Henry, an important Christian thinker in the last half of the twentieth century, answers the question very simply: ". . . evangelical theology dares harbor one and only one presupposition: the living and personal God intelligibly known in his revelation."<sup>4</sup> Without equivocation, Dr. Henry forthrightly and clearly believes that "Our theological systems are not infallible, but God's propositional revelation is."<sup>5</sup> Henry earlier had elaborated on this theme: "In its ontological and epistemological predictions Christianity begins with the biblically attested self-disclosing God, and not with creative speculation free to modify theism as an interpreter wishes."<sup>6</sup> Ronald Nash approaches the question in a similar manner: "Human beings and the universe in which they reside are the creation of God who has revealed himself in Scripture."<sup>7</sup>

For the sake of this volume, let it be stated that two major presuppositions underlie the chapters that follow. The first will be the eternal existence of the personal, transcendent, triune, Creator God. Second, the God of Scripture has revealed His character, purposes, and will in the infallible and inerrant pages of His special revelation, the Bible, which is superior to any other source of revelation or human reason alone.

What is the Christian worldview?<sup>8</sup> The following definition is offered as a working model:

The Christian worldview sees and understands God the Creator and His creation—i.e., man and the world—primarily through the lens of God’s special revelation, the Holy Scriptures, and secondarily through God’s natural revelation in creation as interpreted by human reason and reconciled by and with Scripture, for the purpose of believing and behaving in accord with God’s will and, thereby, glorifying God with one’s mind and life, both now and in eternity.

What will be some of the benefits of embracing the Christian worldview? Let the following serve as a small sample representing the kinds of crucial life-questions that can be answered with ultimate truth and can be embraced with confident faith.<sup>9</sup>

1. How did the world and all that is in it come into being?
2. What is reality in terms of knowledge and truth?
3. How does/should the world function?
4. What is the nature of a human being?
5. What is one’s personal purpose of existence?
6. How should one live?
7. Is there any personal hope for the future?
8. What happens to a person at and after death?
9. Why is it possible to know anything at all?
10. How does one know what is right and what is wrong?
11. What is the meaning of human history?
12. What does the future hold?

Christians of the twenty-first century face the same basic questions about this world and life that confronted the earliest humans in Genesis. They also had to sift through various worldviews to answer the above questions. This has been true throughout history. Consider what faced Joseph (Gen 37—50) and Moses (Ex 2—14) in Egypt, or Elijah when he encountered Jezebel and her pagan prophets (1 Kgs 17—19), or Nehemiah in Persia (Neh 1—2), or Daniel in Babylon (Dan 1—6), or Paul in Athens (Acts 17). They sorted out

the difference between truth and error, right and wrong because they placed their faith in the living God and His revealed Word.<sup>10</sup>

What essentially distinguishes the Christian worldview from other worldviews? At the heart of the matter, a Christian worldview contrasts with competing worldviews in that it: 1) recognizes that God is the unique source of all truth, and 2) relates all truth back to an understanding of God and His purposes for this life and the next. Arthur Holmes superbly summarizes the unique implications of a Christian worldview when relating absolute truth to God.

1. To say that truth is absolute rather than relative means that it is unchanging and universally the same.
2. Truth is absolute not in or of itself but because it derives ultimately from the one, eternal God. It is grounded in his “metaphysical objectivity,” and that of his creation.
3. Absolute propositional truth, therefore, depends on the absolute personal truth (or fidelity) of God, who can be trusted in all he does and says.<sup>11</sup>

Are there any common misperceptions about the Christian worldview, especially by Christians? There are at least two mistaken notions. The first is that a Christian view of the world and life will differ on all points from other worldviews. While this is not always true (e.g., all worldviews accept the law of gravity), the Christian worldview will differ and will be unique on the most important points, especially as they relate to the character of God, the nature and value of Scripture, and the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The second is that the Bible contains all that we need to know. Common sense should put this misdirected thought out of business. However, it is true that the Bible alone contains all that Christians need to know about their spiritual life and godliness through a knowledge of the one true God, which is the highest and most important level of knowledge (2 Pet 1:2-4). Also, while it does not exhaustively address every field, when Scripture speaks in any subject area, it speaks authoritatively.

How can a Christian worldview be spiritually profitable and in what life-contexts? First, in the world of *scholarship* the Christian worldview is offered, not as one of many equals or possibilities, but as the one true view of life whose single source of truth and reality is the Creator God. Thus it serves as a bright light reflecting the glory of God in the midst of intellectual darkness.

Second, a Christian worldview can be used as an effective tool in *evangelism* to answer the questions and objections of the unbeliever. However, it must be clearly understood that in the final analysis, it is the Gospel that has

the power to bring an individual to salvation (Rom 1:16-17). Carl F. H. Henry clearly makes the point that

No person can be “argued into becoming a Christian.” Yet without meeting rational criteria one’s religious experience is less than biblical and evangelical. One can and ought to be persuaded intellectually of the logical consistency and truth of evangelical postulates concerning God and the world. One need not be a believer, however, to understand the truths affirmed by divine revelation. A person persuaded intellectually of the truth of the gospel but seeking to escape or seeking to postpone personal salvific trust invites divine condemnation. But personal faith is a gift of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the truth as a means of conviction and persuasion.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, a Christian worldview is extraordinarily helpful in the realm of *discipleship* to inform and mature a true believer in Christ with regard to the implications and ramifications of one’s Christian faith. It provides a framework by which 1) to understand the world and all of its reality from God’s perspective and 2) to order one’s life according to God’s will.

What should be the ultimate goal of embracing the Christian worldview? Why is the Christian worldview worth recovering? Listen to Jeremiah who passes along God’s direct answer.

*Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”*

—JEREMIAH 9:23-24

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# 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.<sup>1</sup> 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).<sup>2</sup> 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 heart<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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

than blessed. Because they rejected the truth of God's revelation to them, they now would have to think and live apart from Him. The human race seemed doomed without hope beyond death.

However, God in His mercy and grace provided a Savior who could reestablish a right relationship between God and the alienated human race on an individual basis (Titus 3:4-7):

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

This personal salvation can be appropriated by faith in God's grace, which provided Jesus Christ as the only Savior who substitutionally bore the sin of those who would believe that Jesus died and was resurrected on the third day, saving them from the wrath of God (Rom 10:9-13; 1 Cor 15:1-4; Eph 2:8-9; 1 Pet 2:24).

### *The Redeemed Mind*

As a result of salvation, the mind of a newly redeemed person knows and comprehends the glory of God (2 Cor 4:6), whereas before it was blinded by Satan (2 Cor 4:4). This person now possesses "the helmet of salvation" to protect the mind against the "schemes" (Eph 6:11; a mind-related word in the Greek New Testament)<sup>5</sup> of Satan rather than being left vulnerable against him as before salvation (Eph 6:17). This new person (2 Cor 5:17-21) now has a knowledge of God and His will that previously he/she did not possess (1 John 5:18-20).<sup>6</sup>

### *The Renewed Mind<sup>7</sup>*

When a person enters into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, he/she becomes "a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17) who sings "a new song" (Ps 98:1). But that does not mean that everything becomes new in the sense of perfection in one's current walk. The mind acquires a new way to think and a new capacity to clean up old ways of thinking. Unquestionably, God is in the business of mind renewal for Christians.

- "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the *renewal* of your mind . . ." (Rom 12:2).

- ". . . and to be *renewed* in the spirit of your minds" (Eph 4:23).

- “. . . and have put on the new self, which is being *renewed* in knowledge after the image of its creator” (Col 3:10).

The Bible says to “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col 3:2). Paul put this concept in military terms: “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:5).

How does one do this? Scripture is the mind of God. Not all of His mind, to be sure, but all that God cared to give believers. To think like God, one must think like Scripture. That’s why Paul encouraged the Colossians to let the word of Christ richly dwell within them (Col 3:16).

Harry Blamires, an Englishman with extraordinary understanding about the Christian mind, puts this quite well:

To think christianly is to think in terms of Revelation. For the secularist, God and theology are the playthings of the mind. For the Christian, God is real, and Christian theology describes His truth revealed to us. For the secular mind, religion is essentially a matter of theory;<sup>8</sup> for the Christian mind, Christianity is a matter of acts and facts. The acts and facts which are the basis of our faith are recorded in the Bible.<sup>9</sup>

At salvation, Christians are provided with a regenerated mental ability to comprehend spiritual truth. After salvation, Christians need to readjust their thinking chiefly by mind renewal, using the Bible as the means to do so. While the ultimate goal is to have a full knowledge of God and His will (Eph 1:18; Col 1:9-10), the believer must always be on guard lest he/she return to foolish and unbiblical thought patterns due to the lingering effects of sin.

### *The Illuminated Mind*

The Bible says that believers need God’s help to understand God’s Word.

*Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.*

—1 COR 2:12-13

Theologians call this *illumination*. People commonly use the expressions “It just dawned on me” or “The light just came on” to describe dim thoughts that later take on new understanding. God’s Spirit does that for believers with Scripture.

A great prayer to offer as one studies Scripture is, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law” (Ps 119:18). It acknowledges

a colossal need for God's light in Scripture. So do verses like, "Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes; and I will keep it to the end. Give me understanding, that I may keep your law and observe it with my whole heart" (vv. 33-34; see also v. 102).

God wants Christians to know and understand and obey. So He gives them the help they need through His Holy Spirit. Believers, like the two to whom Jesus spoke on the road to Emmaus, require God's assistance: "Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). God's ministry of illumination by which He gives light to the meaning of Scripture is affirmed by the psalmist (Ps 119:130).

Paul and John also comment on this in the New Testament:

*. . . having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might . . .*

—EPH 1:18-19

*But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything—and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught you—abide in him.*

—1 JOHN 2:27

The truth about God's illuminating Scripture for Christians should greatly encourage the believer. While it does not eliminate the need for gifted men to teach (Eph 4:11-12; 2 Tim 4:2) or the hard labor of serious Bible study (2 Tim 2:15), it does promise that there is no need to be enslaved to church dogma or to be led astray by false teachers. Primary dependence for learning Scripture needs to be upon the Author of Scripture—God Himself.

### *The Christlike Mind*

When one thinks like God wants him/her to think and acts like God wants him/her to act, then one will receive God's blessing for obedience (Rev 1:3). Spiritually, the Christian will be that obedient child, that pure bride, and that healthy sheep in Christ's flock who experiences the greatest intimacy with God.

It is amazing how scholars and philosophers over the centuries have recognized the importance of the mind, but have all too often rejected the Creator of the mind and the Savior of the soul. Charles Colson recounts one such classic case:

It was cold and raw that day in 1610 when a French mathematician named René Descartes pulled his cloak around him and climbed into the side compartment of a large stove. Descartes had been wrestling for weeks with questions of doubt and reason in his search for some certainty of a philosophical system. As he warmed himself in his stove, his imagination began glowing with the light of reason, and he resolved to doubt everything that could possibly be doubted.

Hours later Descartes emerged, having determined that there was only one thing he could not doubt, and that was the fact that he doubted. A good day's work. Descartes drew the conclusion, *Cogito, ergo sum*: "I think, therefore I am." Then he went out for a cognac.

Descartes' now-famous postulate led to a whole new promise for philosophic thought: man, rather than God, became the fixed point around which everything else revolved; human reason became the foundation upon which a structure of knowledge could be built; and doubt became the highest intellectual value.<sup>10</sup>

The ultimate form of idolatry would be, like Descartes, to reject the mind of God in Scripture and worship at the altar of one's own independent thinking. A believer's greatest intimacy with the Lord will be those times when our Lord's thoughts supersede ours and one's behavior then models that of Christ.

Unlike Descartes, Christians should be altogether glad to embrace the certain and true mind of God the Father (Rom 11:34), God the Son (1 Cor 2:16), and God the Spirit (Rom 8:27). In contrast to Peter, who was tempted by Satan to set his mind on the things of man, believers are to set their minds on the things of God (Matt 16:23). This has not so much to do with different categories or disciplines of thought but rather with the way things are viewed from a divine perspective.

Christians should stand in awe of God's mind as did the apostle Paul (Rom 11:33-36):

*Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

God's view is the only true perspective that accurately corresponds to all of reality. God's mind sets the standard for which believers are to strive but that they will never fully achieve. Put another way, man's thoughts will never



exceed, equal, or even come close to God's. Over 2,500 years ago the prophet Isaiah said this very thing (Isa 55:8-9):

*For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways, declares 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.*

The ultimate pattern of maintaining the Christian mind is the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul declares, "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). How? We have it with the Bible, which is God's sufficient, special revelation (2 Tim 3:16-17; cf. 2 Pet 1:3). In Philippians 2:5 Paul instructs, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. . . ." The apostle specifically is pointing to Christ's mind-set of *sacrifice* for God's glory (2:7) and *submission* to God's will (2:8).

How does one having the mind of Christ and being Christianly minded think? The Puritan writer John Owen (A.D. 1616-1683) expressed it this way:

We can test ourselves by asking whether our spiritual thoughts are like guests visiting a hotel, or like children living at home. There is a temporary stir and bustle when guests arrive, yet within a little while they leave and are forgotten. The hotel is then prepared for other guests. So it is with religious thoughts that are only occasional. But children belong to their house. They are missed if they don't come home. Preparation is continually being made for their food and comfort. Spiritual thoughts that arise from true spiritual mindedness are like the children of the house—always expected, and certainly enquired for if missing.<sup>11</sup>

## TRUTH, SATAN, AND THE CHRISTIAN MIND

God is true (Ex 34:6; Num 23:19; Ps 25:10; Isa 65:16; John 14:6; 17:3; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18; 1 John 5:20) and communicates only the truth (Ps 31:5, KJV; 119:43, 142, 151, 160; Prov 30:5; Jas 1:18). Therefore, God's Word is truth (John 17:17), and it sets the disciples of Christ free from sin and spiritual ignorance (John 8:32). That is not surprising since God is perfect in knowledge (Job 36:4) and knows all (1 John 3:20). God defines the standard of rational thought.

But can an earthbound human know the mind of a heavenly God? Ronald Nash eloquently answers this important question.

There is nothing in the nature of the divine transcendence that precludes the possibility of our knowing the mind of God. There is nothing irrational or illogical about the content of divine revelation. The Christian God is not the Unknown God of ancient Athens or modern Marburg. He is a God who created men and women as creatures capable of knowing His mind and will and who has made information about His mind and will available in revealed truths.<sup>12</sup>

The Christian mind should be a repository of God's revealed truth. It should not fear, quake, waver, compromise, or bend in the face of opposing ideas or seemingly superior arguments (2 Tim 1:7). Truth does not originate from humans but from God. Therefore, Christians should be the champions of truth in a world filled with lies that are deceptively disguised and falsely declared as the truth.

It was God who invited national Israel, "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD . . ." (Isa 1:18). The subject matter to be considered was repentance from sin and salvation (vv. 16-20). By application, the same invitation is extended to every person alive. But it will not be without Satan's roadblocks.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. While a commitment to think Christianly honors Christ, it is not without opposition. Satan would have believers think contrary to God's Word and then act disobediently to God's will.<sup>13</sup>

Remember that before one became a Christian, his/her mind was blinded by the devil: "The god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Cor 4:4).

Even after salvation, Satan continues his intellectual rampage. Paul had a great concern for the Corinthian church, for he writes, "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). Eve had allowed Satan to do some thinking for her. Then she did some of her own thinking independent of God. When her conclusions differed from God's, she chose to act on her conclusions, not God's commands, which is sin (Gen 3:1-7).

Satan aims his fiery darts (Eph 6:16) at the minds of believers (2 Cor 11:3), making their thought life the battlefield for spiritual conquest. Scriptural accounts abound of those who succumbed, like Eve (Gen 3) and Peter (Matt 16). Others walked away from the fray as victors, like Job (Job 1—2) and Christ (Matt 4). When Christians fall, they most likely forgot to wear the helmet of salvation and/or to wield the sword of truth (Eph 6:17).

In warning believers about life's ongoing, never-ending battle with Satan, Paul on two occasions tells about the schemes or designs of the devil. Two different Greek words are used,<sup>14</sup> but they both relate to the mind:

*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.*

—EPH 6:11

*. . . so that we would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs.*

—2 COR 2:11

Since no one is immune from this attack, one really must heed Peter's strong encouragement: "Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 1:13; cf. 3:15).

So far the discussion has been focused on a preventative or defensive military posture in regard to the mind because the majority of Scripture deals with personal protection. However, Paul also addresses how to go on the intellectual offensive in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

*For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.*

These "weapons" (v. 4) certainly feature the Word of God wielded by a Christian's mind on the battlefield of worldview warfare. In this context of a mind/idea battle, the targeted "strongholds" (v. 4) are "arguments" (v. 5) and "every lofty opinion" (v. 5) that are "raised against the knowledge of God" (v. 5). In other words, any philosophy, worldview, apologetic, or other kind of teaching that undermines, minimizes, contradicts, or tries to eliminate the Christian worldview or any part of it is to be met head-on with an aggressive, offensive battle plan. God's intended end is the destruction ("destroy" is used twice in vv. 4-5) of that which does not correspond to Scripture's clear teaching about God and His created world.

In the context of 2 Corinthians, Paul would have in view any teaching on any subject that did not correspond to his apostolic instruction that had come into the church. Whether an unbeliever or a believer was responsible, whether the idea(s) came from scholars or the uneducated, whether the teaching found wide acceptance or not, all thoughts/opinions that were not *for* the

knowledge of God were to be considered *against* the knowledge of God. Therefore, they were to be targeted for intellectual combat and ultimate elimination. All intellectual activities (e.g., reading, listening to the radio, viewing television and movies, formal academic studies, casual conversations) must always be pursued using the filtering lens of a Christian worldview to determine whether they are allied with the truth of Scripture or are enemies of which to be wary.

### USING THE CHRISTIAN MIND

Psalm 119 provides detailed insight into a Christian's new relation to the Bible, which contains the mind of Christ. First, there will be a great love for and tremendous delight in the Scriptures (vv. 47-48).<sup>15</sup> Second, a believer in Christ will have a strong desire to know God's Word as the best way to know God (vv. 16, 93, 176).<sup>16</sup> Third, when one knows God, it then leads to obeying Him (vv. 44-45).<sup>17</sup>

#### *Meditation*

To hear something once for most people is not enough. To briefly ponder something profound does not allow enough time to grasp and fully understand its significance. This proves to be most true with God's mind in Scripture. Psalm 119 testifies to the importance and blessing of lingering long over God's Word.

The idea of meditating sometimes lends itself to misunderstanding. Meditation involves prolonged thought or pondering. The American figure of speech for meditating is "to chew" on a thought. Some have likened it to the rumination process of the cow's four-stomach digestive system.

The most vivid picture comes from a coffee percolator. The water goes up a small tube and drains down through the coffee grounds. After enough cycles, the flavor of the coffee beans has been transferred to the water, which is then called coffee. So it is that Christians need to cycle their thoughts through the grounds of God's Word until they start to think like God and then act godly.

Scripture commands that believers meditate in three areas:

1. God Ps 27:4; 63:6.
2. God's Word Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2.
3. God's works Ps 143:5; 145:5.

All 176 verses of Psalm 119 extol the virtue of knowing and living out the mind of God. Meditation is mentioned at least seven times as the habit of one who loves God and desires a closer intimacy with Him: "Oh how I

love your law! It is my meditation all the day. . . . My eyes are awake before the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promise” (vv. 97, 148; see also vv. 15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 99).

Meditating on God’s Word will cleanse away the old thoughts that are not of God because meditation places and reinforces new thoughts from Scripture. Also, it puts a protective shield around the mind to block and reject incoming thoughts that contradict God. That is the scriptural process of renewing the mind. A part of Eve’s fall can be attributed to her failure to adequately meditate upon God’s clear and sufficient Word (Gen 2:16-17).

### *Think on These Things*

Someone has suggested that the mind is the taproot of the soul. That being so, one needs to carefully and nutritionally feed his/her soul by sinking one’s taproot deep into God’s mind in Scripture. A logical question to ask is, “What’s the recommended soul food?” Paul’s gourmet menu for the mind includes those thought entrees that are 1) “true,” 2) “honorable,” 3) “just,” 4) “pure,” 5) “lovely,” 6) “commendable,” 7) excellent, and 8) praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). In meditating on God’s Word and thinking on these things, Christians will avoid setting their minds on “earthly things” (Phil 3:19) and will keep from being double-minded (Jas 1:6-8).

### BALANCING REVELATION AND REASON

Are divine revelation and human reason like oil and water—do they never mix? Christians have sometimes reached two erroneous extremes in dealing with divine revelation and human reason. First, there is *anti-intellectualism*, which basically concludes that if a subject matter is not discussed in the Bible, it is not worthy of serious study/thought. Or, only what the Bible teaches on a topic should be examined. This unbiblical approach to learning and thinking leads to cultural and intellectual withdrawal. At the opposite extreme is *hyper-intellectualism*, which embraces natural revelation at the same or at a higher level of value and credibility as God’s special revelation in Scripture; when the two are in conflict, natural revelation is the preferred source of truth. This unbiblical approach results in scriptural withdrawal.<sup>18</sup>

This matter is not resolved with an either/or approach but rather with a both/and process. The proper balance comes by beginning with Scripture, which is inerrant.<sup>19</sup> Where the Bible speaks to a discipline, its truth is superior. When the Bible does not speak, there is a whole world of God’s creation to explore for knowledge, but with the caveat that man’s ability to draw conclusions is fallible, unlike God’s Word. This is especially true of

thinkers who continually reject their need of Christ's salvation. This does not necessarily mean that their facts are wrong or even that their basic ideas are in error. But it does guarantee that their worldview is not in accord with God's perspective.

A recent example of perceived hyper-intellectualism appears in *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, where the author writes, "By 'the mind' or 'the life of the mind,' I am not thinking primarily of theology as such."<sup>20</sup> He goes on, "By an evangelical 'life of the mind' I mean more the effort to think like a Christian—to think within a specifically Christian framework—across the whole spectrum of modern learning."<sup>21</sup> The author's comments raise a most significant question: How can one think Christianly without thinking theologically, and how can one think theologically without thinking biblically? It is not surprising that the writer confesses that he has thought at times that it is impossible to be, with integrity, both evangelical and intellectual.<sup>22</sup> In this writer's opinion, this illustrates unbalanced hyper-intellectualism at its worst, giving too much attention to the fallen mind of man and too little attention to the perfect mind of God and His infallible revelation in Scripture.

A more commendable approach is that of J. Gresham Machen, one of conservative Christianity's finest minds in his day (1881-1937): "Every Christian must think about God; every Christian to some degree must be a theologian."<sup>23</sup> Whatever the subject, one must begin with God's perspective from Scripture rather than with man's opinion from observation, research, and logic. Harry Blamires sums the matter up succinctly: "To think christianly is to think in terms of Revelation."<sup>24</sup> It is clearly a contradiction to declare oneself to be a Christian thinker and then relegate God's mind in Scripture to a place of equal or inferior value to man's thinking.

Arthur F. Holmes, former Chairman of the Department of Philosophy at a well-known Christian college, convincingly states the centrality of God and His special revelation to a Christian worldview:

The crucial question for the recovery of truth, however, is how a Christian world-view can be introduced into education. My point is not that it ought not be excluded but that in practice, when we think Christianly, it cannot possibly be left out. Our world-view shows itself in the way we shape and relate our ideas and see everything in relation to God.<sup>25</sup>

Unmistakably, from the perspective of and with a Christian worldview, believers are to engage their own minds and the minds of others to the best of their ability and opportunity. However, several wise cautions are in order.

1. To become a scholar and try to change the way one's own generation thinks generally is secondary to becoming a Christian and changing the way one personally thinks about Christ.

2. Formal education in a range of disciplines is a necessary but secondary priority compared to gospel education—i.e., obeying the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) and taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth, to every creature.

3. General revelation at best points to a higher power, while special revelation introduces this higher power personally as the triune Godhead of Scripture who created the world and all that is in it (see Isa 40—48 where Jehovah reminds Israel of this critical truth) and provided the only redeemer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. To know about the truth is not nearly as important as personally and redemptively being in fellowship with the Truth, Jesus Christ (John 14:6), who is the only source of eternal life.

5. The ultimate accountability in life will not be how much one knows factually, but rather how well one obeys the commandments of God (Eccl 12:13-14).

6. The New Testament church did not have a mandate to nor did they intellectualize their world; rather, they gospelized it by proclaiming the saving grace of Jesus Christ to a broad range of society members, from key political leaders like King Agrippa (Acts 25:23—26:32) to lowly imprisoned slaves like Onesimus (Philem 10).

7. To moralize, politicize, or intellectualize society without first seeing spiritual conversion is to guarantee only a brief and generally inconsistent change that is shallow, not deep, temporary, not lasting, and ultimately damning, not saving.

What then is the key to embracing a Christian worldview and cultivating a biblical mind-set? Holmes provides this wise, contemporary counsel:

Since Christ the Truth is the unifying focus of the Biblical world-view, to think “Christianly” is to think “world-viewishly.” This means we locate each field of inquiry within a Christian understanding of life as a whole, and that we interpret what we know in that larger context. The key ingredients of such a world-view will include the Biblical conceptions of nature, of man, and of history, in relation to the God we know in Christ. To think “Christianly” is to bring these concepts into our thinking about everything else.<sup>26</sup>

Let it be repeated that this is a both/and approach to cultivating a biblical mind-set, not an either/or response. However, the study of special revelation is the first priority followed in the second place by learning from natural revelation. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kgs 3:12; 4:29-34),

wrote the same advice almost three thousand years earlier. Here is the most authoritative statement on the subject of the mind and knowledge, since it is Scripture.

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.*

—PROV 1:7

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.*

—PROV 9:10; CF. 1 COR 1:20-21

The Alpha and the Omega of the Christian worldview is a *knowledge of God* (2 Cor 2:14; 4:6; Eph 1:17; Col 1:10; 2 Pet 1:2-3, 8; 3:18) and a *knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; Titus 1:1). Above all, at the very center of a Christian worldview is the Lord Jesus Christ, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). Nothing can be fully understood if God is not known first.

#### THE CHRISTIAN MIND—WASTED OR INVESTED?

These beautiful words from the pen of Kate B. Wilkinson (1859-1928) should be reflected in every Christian’s daily prayer regarding the use of his/her mind.

*May the mind of Christ my Savior  
Live in me from day to day,  
By His love and pow’r controlling  
All I do and say.<sup>27</sup>*

By praying and then living this way, the Christian’s mind will never be wasted but, rather, invested in glorifying God by bringing one’s worldview into line with the worldview of God’s Scripture. That is why all Christians are enjoined to “think biblically!” and thus recover a Christian worldview.

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