

THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

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Thinking Biblically Part 5: The Virtue of Rationality

By John W. Robbins

Editor's note: The content of this Review is taken from the forthcoming book Thinking Biblically: A Challenge to Christians, which will be published in February 2022 Lord willing. It is the Foreword followed by Chapter 6 "The Virtue of Rationality."

Foreword

With society increasingly going mad, with the lies being told about so many things by those with agendas, and with the church offering little by way of rebuttal of Biblical truth, *Thinking Biblically*, by the late Dr. John W. Robbins, challenges Christians to Think Biblically, that is, for Christians to think about all manner of things according to the Scriptures. Unfortunately, for too many Christians, and this includes leaders in the churches, their thinking is not based on the Scriptures, but on other shaky foundations. Such false foundations are Empiricism, the view that knowledge can be gained through the senses, and Mysticism, the view that knowledge can be gained through experience, often ecstatic experiences. Thus, the necessity of Robbins' challenge to believers.

There is no doubt that the church needs to be challenged to Think Biblically, especially in this anti-intellectual age in which we live. The various titles written by Christian authors over the last fifty plus years demonstrate this, some of which Dr. Robbins refers to and criticizes in the following chapters: Frank E. Gaebelin, *The Pattern of God's Truth*, 1954; Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind*,

1963; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Reason within the Bounds of Religion*, [1976] 1984; James W. Sire, *How to Read Slowly: A Christian Guide to Reading with the Mind*, 1978; Arthur Holmes, Editor, *The Making of a Christian Mind: A Christian World View and the Academic Enterprise*, 1985; Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 1994; Os Guinness, *Fit Bodies Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What to Do About It*, 1994; J. P. Moreland, *Love God with All Your Mind: The Role of Reason in the Life of the Soul*, 1997; James W. Sire, *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling*, 2000; Clifford Williams, *The Life of the Mind: A Christian Perspective*, 2002; and Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Loving God with All Your Mind: Thinking as a Christian in the Postmodern World*, 2003. Yet, the church (not to mention secular culture) continues on its path of irrationality. Dr. Robbins goes directly to the Scriptures, to let the Scriptures speak on what it means to think. He also exposes those, both within the church and without, who attack thinking. Dr. Robbins also establishes the purposes for thinking Biblically, again from Scripture, and he demonstrates the Biblical method of thinking. Finally, Dr. Robbins equips the believer with the Biblical weapons with which to defeat the powerful foes of Thinking Biblically – the world, the flesh, and the devil. All of this makes Robbins' *Thinking Biblically* the antidote to the irrationality of our age.

The contents of this book were first delivered as lectures at The Westminster Institute in June and July 2000, and a few months later at Midway Presbyterian Church. The lectures were transcribed, edited, and formatted for book form. At the end of each chapter, which is the content of a lecture, sometimes the combination of two lectures, dealing with the same subject matter, are questions to help with studying the content. Thomas Juodaitis is responsible for the editing, formatting, and the questions for study at the end of each chapter. Also included as Appendices are the following *Trinity Reviews* pertinent to the topic: “The Biblical View of Truth,” by John W. Robbins; “How Do We Learn?” and “How Does Man Know God?” both by Gordon H. Clark, and “Did C. S. Lewis Go to Heaven?” by John W. Robbins.

I also wish to acknowledge and express my appreciation for the work of Albert Pigeon in doing much of the leg work of footnoting and formatting, and the work of Mike Britton, who used this material in teaching his courses at Faith Seminary in Baltimore, Maryland.

October 31, 2021
Thomas W. Juodaitis

Rationality Is a Virtue

So far, we have talked about some characteristics of thinking and about man’s rationality being the image of God. Now we will consider the virtue of rationality, and we begin by looking at *Romans* 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Paul says do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Recall the statement of Jonathan Edwards from a previous chapter. He says,

There is no other way by which any means of grace whatsoever can be of any benefit but by knowledge.... No speech can be a means of grace but by conveying knowledge. The Bible can be of no manner of profit to us any other wise than as it conveys some knowledge to the mind.¹

Edwards is completely in accord here with what Paul writes in *Romans* 12:2: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The renewing of the mind is the first step in our transformation. It is the second step in the transformation. It is the third step. It is indispensable means of the transformation.

Next, look at what *I Corinthians* 13:11 says about maturity in understanding. Paul says, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” Compare that with *I Corinthians* 14:20, “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”

Some people get confused about this. When they hear about a childlike faith, they think it means having a faith that knows very little. They think of Christ reprimanding the disciples for chasing the children away.

Matthew 19:14 states, “But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” The children are commended for their faith, not for their ignorance, but for their absolute trust. That is the point of the comparison. Paul tells us very clearly, Do not be children in understanding, be mature. Be children in malice. Be undeveloped there. But be well developed in understanding. That is the command we are given.

Now listen to Paul’s contrast between the rationality of the Christian and the non-Christian in *Ephesians* 4:17-24:

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the *vanity of their mind*,

¹ Jonathan Edwards, *Christian Knowledge, or The Importance and Advantage of a Thorough Knowledge of Divine Truth*, Section 3, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* Volume 2, The Banner of Truth, [1834] 1976, 158.

Having their *understanding darkened*, being alienated from the life of God through the *ignorance that is in them*, because of the *blindness of their heart*: Who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

But ye have not so *learned Christ*; If so be that ye have *heard him* and have *been taught by him*, as *the truth is in Jesus*: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be *renewed in the spirit of your mind*; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Emphasis added)

Notice how Paul phrases this. He says that the Gentiles walk in the *vanity [futility in NKJV] of their minds*. He says that their *understandings are darkened*, being alienated from the life of God. He says they are *ignorant* because of the *blindness of their hearts*. But he says that the Christians have *learned Christ*. That is an interesting phrase. He says that they have *heard him* and been *taught by him*. He says *the truth is in Jesus*. He tells them to be *renewed in the spirit of their minds*.

Listen further to what Paul says in *Romans 7:22-8:7*:

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after to the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,

and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For they that are in the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Perhaps I am giving the wrong impression when I emphasize the mind and the intellect, and I want to correct something immediately. We tend to make a distinction in society between the *intellectuals* and the rest of us. The Bible makes no such distinction. Simply because you are a human being, you are an intellect, you are a mind. Keep in mind that these letters were written to the common people. Many of them were illiterate and could not read them for themselves. The letters were read aloud publicly.

Of course, the Christian church encourages learning how to read so one can read the Scriptures for oneself. Nevertheless, there is no great distinction in Christian doctrine between some group that is called the *intellectuals*, and some group that is not. Illiterate slaves were addressed just as much as the Caesars were in these letters. There is no class distinction. I do not mean to convey a view of society or the Church that there are some that are *intellectuals*, and some that are not. Simply because you are a man, you are a mind and have understanding. These injunctions to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, apply to illiterate slaves as much as they do to educated men like Paul himself.

However, this means that we have no excuse for being lazy. We cannot say that studying Scripture and theology is just for those *intellectuals*. These commands are for each and every Christian. They are not contingent upon IQ. Scripture says nothing about IQ. Because you are a man and a believer in Christ and have learned Christ, you are obligated not to walk in the futility of your mind as the Gentiles walk. These commands are addressed to every Christian, and every Christian is supposed to abide by them and obey them.

Truth Is a Characteristic of Rationality

Now look at several characteristics of rationality and, above all, rationality concerns truth. We have already said a great deal about truth. We have demonstrated from Scripture that God is truth; each of the three Persons of the Godhead is truth; and Scripture itself is truth. Here are some verses about truth which we have not looked at yet. We begin with *Psalms* 19:9, 10: “The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.”

When the Psalmist speaks of the judgments of the LORD, the word *judgment* here does not mean what we might think it does. We tend to think of a court of law, and a judge or jury rendering a verdict of guilty or not guilty or something like that. However, in Scripture *judgment* often has a broader meaning as it does in this case. A judgment is simply a statement. If I make the statement, “The cat is black,” that is a judgment. That is how the Psalmist is using *judgment* here. Whatever the LORD says, his judgments are completely true and righteous.

Truth is also spoken about in *Psalms* 119:160. “The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever” (NKJV). Here *judgment* is being used in that same, broad sense—a simple statement or proposition. Also, notice the universals used to describe the degree, extent, and duration of the truth and righteousness of God’s Word: *entirety*, *every*, and *forever*.

The Psalmist prays for truth in *Psalms* 25:4-5. “Show me Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; On You I wait all the day” (NKJV). He says, “Lead me in Your truth and teach me.”

And again, in *Psalms* 43:3, “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.” He says, “Send out thy light and thy truth!”

And finally, a verse about truth from the New Testament. “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth” (1 *John* 2:21). Here you have said in very simple and ordinary language what is

called in logic, *the law of contradiction*. “No lie is of the truth.” There is a distinction between truth and falsehood. Again, notice how thoroughly intellectual this is, having to do with the mind, having to do with knowledge, having to do with truth.

Order Is a Characteristic of Rationality

Order is another characteristic of rationality. Look at the opening verses of Luke’s *Gospel*. Luke 1:1-4 state

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Apparently, Theophilus had been instructed orally in the important points of the Gospel and the life of Christ, but so that Theophilus may know the certainty of those things in which he had been instructed, Luke says he is going to write an orderly account. Order is a characteristic of rationality. God himself is rational. He does things in an orderly fashion. He is not the author of confusion. He is not the author of disorder. He has an eternal plan, and everything fits into that plan. Here Luke is imitating God. He says he is going to write his account in an orderly fashion.

We are not going to read it here, but I would like you to read at least chapter 1 of the book of *Leviticus* yourself so you can see the explicit directions and the detailed order given for the offering of a sacrifice in detail. One of the things you ought to learn from reading *Leviticus* is the concern God has for order.

Paul speaks of order in 1 *Corinthians* 11:33, 34. “Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I

come” (NKJV). Apparently, the Corinthians were waiting for each other the way pigs do, so Paul tells them to wait for one another. He says that if anyone is hungry and cannot wait, then he should eat at home before coming to the meeting lest they come together for judgment.

You learn from this *epistle* that the Corinthian church was very disorderly. Paul gives them explicit instructions in this *epistle* and says he will set the rest in order when he comes. Then he will use his apostolic authority to bring some order out of the chaos.

He speaks of order again in *1 Corinthians* 14:39, 40. “Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order” (NKJV). Some of our Charismatic friends like to speak in “tongues” and “prophesy,” but they seem to forget about verse 40, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” Prior to this Paul has given very explicit instructions about how they are to speak, how they are to interpret, how many there are to be. Here is what Paul said earlier in the chapter:

Let prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints. (*1 Corinthians* 14:29-33)

Some may have claimed they had to speak right away because they were being moved. Here Paul tells them, “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets,” so there is no excuse for disorder, and he explains why. He says, “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.”

He is concerned with order also in *2 Thessalonians* 3:6-12:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the

tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we do not have power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

Again, he is correcting disorder in the church. They are not working, they are busybodies, and he refers to this as disorder. They have no purpose, which is another characteristic of rationality. Instead, these folks were meddling in everybody else’s affairs, and Paul tells them to mind their own business. That is part of rationality.

Clarity Is a Characteristic of Rationality

Clarity is another characteristic of rationality, and there are several verses that speak to this. We will start with *Habakkuk* 2:2: “And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it.” The prophet is commanded to *make it plain on tablets so that he who runs may read it*; he means to make it clear. He is to write it so clearly that the man who only sees it for a few seconds can read it without having to stop and take much time to figure it out.

Now look at clarity in a passage in the New Testament.

For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech [the *KJV* has *plainness of speech*—unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds

were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 *Corinthians* 3:11-18 *NKJV*)

Paul talks here about using great boldness or plainness of speech—speaking with great clarity.

Now listen to what Jesus says in *Matthew* 7:3-5:

And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Jesus speaks here about seeing with clarity in order to judge properly.

Purpose Is a Characteristic of Rationality

Purpose is also a characteristic of rationality, and Scripture abounds with examples of the purposes of God as well as of men.

Editor's note: The recording ends here, and there were no notes found to discuss the purposes of God and men. What follows is some Scripture discussing both the purposes of God and men with some brief commentary by the editors.

Purposes of God in Scripture

The following Scriptures mention the purpose of God, and the reader is urged to read and study these passages: *Job* 33:17; *Isaiah* 14:24-27; 19:12; 23:9;

46:11; *Jeremiah* 4:28; 26:3; 36:3; 49:20; 50:45; 51:29; *Acts* 26:16; *Romans* 8:28; 9:11, 17; *Ephesians* 1:9, 11; 3:11; 2 *Timothy* 1:9; and *1 John* 3:8. Let us look at a couple of these.

Isaiah 14:24, 27: “The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have *purposed*, so shall it stand.... For the LORD of hosts hath *purposed*, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?”

“Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have *purposed* it, I will also do it” (*Isaiah* 46:11).

“For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black; because I have spoken it, I have *purposed* it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it” (*Jeremiah* 4:28).

Notice in these four verses that *YAHWEH* purposes to do certain things, which he will do, and no one or nothing can annul it, and he is not a man that needs to repent, because he is omniscient, knowing the end from the beginning.

Next, notice the purpose of God in these verses from *Romans*:

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his *purpose*” (*Romans* 8:28).

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the *purpose* of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) ... For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same *purpose* have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (*Romans* 9:11, 17)

Here we see the purpose of God in election and salvation, and notice *Romans* 9:11 and 17 that God's purpose and the purpose of Scripture are the same, even as God and Scripture are interchanged; for, if you compare *Romans* 9:17 with *Exodus* 9:16, which is the quotation Paul is referencing, you notice that God and Scripture are interchanged.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before

Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.... And in very deed for this *cause* have I raised thee up, for to shew *in* thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. (*Exodus* 9:13, 16)

In the *Exodus* passage God is speaking, and in Paul's quotation of it in *Romans*, he says the Scripture says unto Pharaoh.

Again, the purpose of God for his own glory and the salvation of his people is seen in *Ephesians* 1:9 and 11, and later in *2 Timothy* 1:9 and *1 John* 3:8:

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath *purposed* in himself: ... In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the *purpose* of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will....

And this purpose is purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, according to *Ephesians* 3:11: "According to the eternal *purpose* which he *purposed* in Christ Jesus our Lord." As Paul says elsewhere that all the promises [purposes] of God are yes and amen in Christ Jesus: "For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (*2 Corinthians* 1:20).

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own *purpose* and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (*2 Timothy* 1:9).

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this *purpose* the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (*First John* 3:8).

Purposes of Men in Scripture

The following Scriptures mention the purposes of men, and the reader is urged to read and study these passages: *1 Kings* 5:5; *2 Chronicles* 28:10; 32:2; *Ezra* 4:5; *Job* 17:11; *Psalms* 17:3; 140:4; *Proverbs* 15:22; 20:18; *Ecclesiastes* 3:1, 17; *Jeremiah* 49:30; *Daniel* 1:8; 6:17; *Acts* 11:23; 19:21; 20:3; 27:13,

43; *Romans* 1:13; *2 Corinthians* 1:17; 9:7; *Ephesians* 6:22; *Colossians* 4:8; and *2 Timothy* 3:10. Again, we will look at a few of these.

"And, behold, I *purpose* to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name" (*1 Kings* 5:5).

"And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was *purposed* to fight against Jerusalem" (*2 Chronicles* 32:2).

"And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their *purpose*, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia" (*Ezra* 4:5).

"Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am *purposed* that my mouth shall not transgress" (*Psalms* 17:3).

In the above verses, we notice that men have both good purposes – Solomon purposing to build the temple of the LORD, and the Psalmist purposing that he will not transgress with his mouth, and bad purposes – Sennacherib purposing to fight against Judah, and the hired counselors who were trying to frustrate the purposes of the Jews returned from captivity in rebuilding the temple and the wall around Jerusalem. Also worthy of note, is that those with the bad purposes were thwarted according to the plan and purpose of Almighty God.

Next, look at the following Scriptures:

But Daniel *purposed* in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. (*Daniel* 1:8)

Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with *purpose* of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. (*Acts* 11:23)

After these things were ended, Paul *purposed* in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. (*Acts* 19:21)

Did you catch that the purposing of Daniel and Paul was “in his heart,” or “of heart,” or “in the spirit”? This shows that purposing is intellectual, and that the heart is the inner man, as Dr. Robbins noted in a previous chapter.

New Book in Progress

The next installment of the ten-year compilation of *The Trinity Review, 2009-2018* titled *For the Truth* is in initial stages of being type set and will be published later this year, Lord willing.

2021 Book Sale Extended

The 2021 Overstock Book Sale is extended through February 15, 2022.