

The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization

By Vishal Mangalwadi
Thomas Nelson, Nashville Tennessee, 2011. 442 pages.

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Chosen by *World* as one of the most important books of the decade, *The Book That Made Your World* carefully demonstrates how the Bible played a powerful part in the development of Western civilization. Written by an Indian philosopher and Christian, one of the central questions posed by the author is: If the word of God is true, then how was God's promise that the Lord was going to bless all nations of the world through Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 22:18) evidenced in the author's home country? The answer is engaging and unusual.

As an outside observer of Western civilization, Mangalwadi takes the reader on a riveting and well-researched journey that encompasses both his personal struggle to understand Truth and a history of the world from ancient times to modern-day America, India, and Japan. To illuminate how various worldviews failed or furthered mankind, he discusses wide-ranging themes — rationalism, nationalism, language, heroism, compassion, wealth, and freedom — and introduces the reader to historical and modern figures from Augustine to Kurt Cobain. Through it all, Mangalwadi shows the specific ways the Holy Scriptures set humans free and how societies based on the Scriptures facilitated learning, provided healthy social structure, and created economic and technological advances to bless mankind.

Mangalwadi began his quest with an attempt to study the Vedas. To his dismay, he was told that the holiest of Hindu scriptures were not published in Hindi because they were not meant to be understood, just memorized and chanted. Shocked, Mangalwadi reasoned that if the Vedas could not be understood, they could not convey truth. So he studied the Bible and came to the belief that it was the true word of God. Furthermore, he began to realize that cultures built on the values of Scripture experienced prosperity and advancement beyond those built on other worldviews. Medical, scientific, and technological

advances were not the result of smarter humans in these cultures, rather the Western world flourished because of the infrastructure of a culture derived from biblical truth. In topic after topic, Mangalwadi demonstrates that the biblical belief in the value and dignity of man uniquely bred compassion, hope, and blessing.

This engrossing book has valuable implications for both the business and the educational spheres. As corporations search the globe for cheaper sources of resources, the clash between commercialism and culture becomes ever more intense. The issues facing business leaders as to how to respond to and engage with local cultures are more pertinent than ever. In an age of increased awareness of human rights coupled with relativism — a corrupted version of tolerance leading to the denial of absolute truth — Mangalwadi's arguments for biblical foundations in society lend an important message for current and future business leaders.

A strength of the book is Mangalwadi's advocacy of and persuasive arguments for the use of education to lift people from poverty and hopelessness. Anyone who is interested in the Western educational system and its implications as a powerful tool for transforming societies would find this book well researched and helpful to their understanding.

Conclusion? This is a well-written demonstration that the biblical worldview is the only worldview that provides life, hope, and the ability of man to change desperate situations for himself and that can deliver humans from the bondage of societal ills brought on through either evil or man-made traditions. The book discusses the benefits of biblical precepts in business in engaging, unusual ways that will resonate with today's students and lead to thoughtful discussion. The entire book is well worth reading, but given its length (442 pages), selected chapters might be a better choice for classes. I particularly

recommend the chapters on technology (Ch. 7), morality (Ch. 14) and true wealth (Ch. 17) for economic and business classes.

The chapter on technology explains how cultures based on a non-biblical worldview have traditionally only embraced technology that advanced warfare, whereas biblically based societies developed technology to improve the welfare of its citizens and to free mankind from mindless toil while celebrating creative work. The Bible teaches that work is good and Scripture-based societies realized the difference between work that liberates and toil that enslaves. Mangalwadi illustrates that technology is the result of man using his muscles and mind. When people have the leisure time to devote their minds to more than just sustaining life, technology is advanced and results in validating humanity rather than dehumanizing people.

Chapter 14 on morality invites the reader to contemplate corruption and its effects on the poverty of nations. Mangalwadi poses a question to the reader: Does poverty cause corruption, or is it the other way around? Corruption on a large scale, government, or business level keeps nations in poverty and hampers economic development. Mangalwadi provides empirical data that countries with a biblical foundation are less corrupt than secular nations. Those societies that are based on a moral law, and absolute truth, who believe that God's law is greater than man's combined with the unique self-governance principle of Christianity create a culture of trust and respect. Corruption thrives in darkness; Christianity provides light in society.

The chapter on true wealth challenges the reader to examine questions of rich verses poor, generating wealth verses greed, and selfishness verses compassion. In Scripture-based societies, individuals strive to make money and increase profit partially for self-interest and self-preservation, but within the boundaries of a moral code. The biblical culture encourages work which makes a profit. The profit is then saved and reinvested, ultimately benefiting others in society. Mangalwadi rightly initiates a discussion on not serving both God and money, which would seem to contradict the process of accumulating wealth, making a profit, and then reinvesting to make more profit. However, the Bible also has parables regarding stewardship. Those entrusted with talent are expected to nurture and grow that talent and then they will be entrusted with more. Societies built on biblical principles also have the foundation of rights for its citizens to private property ownership and intellectual property rights. Secular societies such as Communist societies have shown

that when individual's property is not protected, when it is confiscated by the state, individuals have no incentive to create or to invent. When there is no personal ownership, there is no room for individuals to create wealth, make a profit, and reinvest in society.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Jenny Lesley currently works in finance and accounting for a manufacturing company in Southern California. She is endlessly fascinated to see how the Lord uses His servants to accomplish His will and purpose both within the workplace and within society. She earned her MBA from the University of La Verne in 2016.

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