

Think Again

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Introduction

Christianity involves faith, reason and mystery. These three, properly balanced, are what allow us to apprehend the fullness of the revelation of God; none of them, in and of itself; none of them to the exclusion or even merely the diminishment of the others. Without faith mankind is unable to please God, without reason mankind is tossed by the winds of doctrine, and without mystery mankind perceives a small God made in their own image.

When Christians over-emphasize the faith component of Christianity there is a risk that we cease to employ our cognitive faculties effectively and as a result allow the life of the mind to slip into decline. In so doing we fail to obey the scriptural mandate to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and **with all your mind** and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30, emphasis added).

The fact is that we are created as an amalgamated being, corporeal and incorporeal woven together, and with our whole being we are to love God; part of that is engaging our intellect. As a church body, and as individuals, I believe we have failed to fully engage our intellect in matters of faith and outreach, and we are the weaker for it.

Furthermore, it's by the renewing of the mind that the Holy Spirit effects change in our hearts:

Do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewal of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2, ESV, Emphasis added

It's our thoughts that drive our heart and our actions; that on which we meditate is that which we emulate:

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, **think about** these things.

Philippians 4:8 ESV, Emphasis added

We are called to serve God with our whole being, including our mind. If you feel or have been told that “your brain is getting in the way”, perhaps the truth of the matter is that your mind is struggling because we have not taught our doctrines in a clear, thoughtful and compelling manner. Or perhaps it indicates that, as a church, we have allowed ourselves to become lazy; after all thinking cogently is hard work. Or perhaps it indicates that the doctrines in question are not what the Bible actually teaches. In each case there is a scholarly need within the church.

Christianity is a faith which is integrated with reason, and its teachings, though sometimes difficult, even mysterious, are inherently reasonable. And as a reasonable faith it *will* withstand thoughtful scrutiny.

About the Author

I am a conservative, biblical Christian with experience in a wide range of particular Christian theological systems ranging from Catholic to Pentecostal. I believe that my years of experience have left me with a balanced theological system, though I constantly strive to understand God, his word, and his world better. I hold a non-idealized, historically orthodox view of Christianity, believing the Bible to be the inspired word of God, fully true and accurate in the original languages, and completely reliable *when rightly understood*.

While studying to be an evangelist as a young man, I had my faith seriously disrupted by experiences inconsistent with what I was learning. By the time the next 15 years had passed I came to brink of abandoning

Christianity altogether. My very real personal encounters with God were all that kept me hanging on by the slimmest of threads; I thought, “Christianity doesn’t work, but God is certainly real”.

So began the process of rebuilding my belief system from its very foundations. Over time I realized my picture of God had been severely corrupted by many painful experiences. Investigating the actual teachings of Christianity and their rationale I found, to my surprise, that Christianity was much stronger and more rational than I had realized. Through this process it became clear to me that the church needs people responding to the questions believers have; the kinds of questions I had myself. So my growing passion is to teach others what Christianity *is* and what it *is not* and to respond to the various arguments made against it.

There are some obvious challenges to being successful in that capacity, but I have found that it consists less in arguing with atheists and skeptics and more in providing other Christians with accurate information to begin with so as to prevent them from leaving the faith in the first place.

As Anthony Horvath says, “Questioning is a very normal and natural part of growing up, and I am convinced that it is not wrong to ask questions of God at any age. God doesn’t strike people down. On the other hand, if people are going to reject Christianity, it is my aim to at least make sure they reject the real Christianity and not a false view of it. Also, much heartache can be avoided by educating Christians properly to begin with. My experience has helped me... but it was unnecessary.”

The articles on this website are my opinions and views on various topics of a religious and philosophical nature. They are opinion pieces, and as such reflect my thinking at the time (and only mine); I reserve the right to change my mind at any time (also known as the right to grow in wisdom and learning), but I may forget to change what’s written here or I may elect to leave the piece here as representing a valid or interesting point of view even though I no longer hold it.

I try to study a wide range of opinions, preferring to understand an issue from all sides. I find that one can only fully understand one’s own position when one properly understands opposing arguments. This also helps reduce the confirmation bias which leads to entrenched and narrow-minded thinking.

A particular interest of mine is the intersection of Christian theology and science. Inherent in that is a desire to be able to demonstrate to myself and others that the Christian worldview is rational and cogent and that it is consistent with reliable scientific discovery. I expect that as we discover more about God’s world the

evidence for the Christian worldview will increase commensurately. It's my firm belief that if the Bible and science appear to be in conflict then either or both are being misinterpreted.

I do not believe that anyone can be “argued” into the Kingdom of God. But I do believe that being able to present an intellectually honest, reasonable, and logically coherent understanding of Christianity can remove intellectual barriers which cause some people to unnecessarily reject it. That means having a theology which is consistent with reliable scientific observations (noting that one must be very careful to distinguish between the raw *observations* and the *conclusions* drawn from them). Furthermore, we must be careful to weigh the evidence and consider it according to its relative level of certainty as well as recognizing how our worldviews bias interpretation and confidence in particular kinds of evidence.

Other Web Sites

Athanatos Christian Apologetics Ministries

The blog of Dr. Anthony Horvath, aka “St Johnny”.

Anthony is a member of the Lutherans for Life speakers bureau and as such is willing to speak on a variety of life issues. He also speaks on apologetics related issues and is willing to engage with your church or organization about any number of topics.

I find Dr. Horvath insightful, often poignant, frequently challenging, occasionally a little over the top. His stance on the sanctity of human life and all that flows from that principle is sorely needed in our culture of “me”.

Gary Jensen's Blog (M. Div., Rev)

Gary is a personal friend, a former member of Reasons To Believe's Seattle chapter for apologetics, and one of the most effective, witty and thoughtful writers I know. What he has to say on various topics related to

apologetics (though not limited to that) is always worth reading.

Dr. Jay Wile's Blog (Ph.D.)

Dr. Wile is a scientist of Young-Earth creation persuasion. He came to faith *because* of his science, which compelled him to believe by the sheer weight of evidence for a creator.

While I disagree with him on the age of the Earth, I always appreciate his demeanor and he always has something of value to add to the debate. He brings to the table an opposing view to mine, in a way that presents the science without great bias and leaves no doubt that we are brothers and that the age of creation is a secondary matter of faith. My wish is that all of us in the church involved in the age-of-the-Earth debate would be so well mannered and considerate.

Reasons to Believe

Reasons To Believe is a science/faith apologetics ministry that holds an Old-Earth creation viewpoint and a concordist approach to scripture. Their web site is possibly one of the most useful resources for anyone involved in science/faith apologetics, or just wishing to have their faith in God strengthened by being able to see how he is evinced in his creation.

I am actively involved with RTB through the Seattle chapter.

Code Craft Tech Site

This is my personal web site focussed on matters of technology and software development. It's less well maintained than this one because I don't really have the time to operate two sites, and the subject matter here is far more important in my mind.