



# THE BEREIA PAGE

*“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11*

## Two-sided apologetics

“Having made Christianity’s irreducible and nonnegotiable truth claims as clear as possible, apologists should engage in both negative and positive apologetic efforts. Negative apologetics can be taken to mean two things: deflecting criticism of the Christian worldview and philosophically criticizing non-Christian worldviews. Positive apologetics has to do with giving evidence and arguments for core Christian claims. Both are strategic in the postmodern context.” ~ Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism* (InterVarsity Press, 2000), 167

## Address the root issue

“Clearly, any person under the control of naturalistic presuppositions could not consistently believe in the miraculous. For such a person, evidence of putative miracles can never be persuasive. Miracles, by definition, are impossible. No arguments on behalf of the miraculous can possibly succeed with a naturalist. The only proper way to address that unbelief is to begin by challenging his or her naturalism.” ~ Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* (Zondervan Publishing House), 120

## Our Minds Still Matter

David Anguish

*Our age, declares Time magazine, is the Age of Unreason. Logic is a dirty word and thinking a bad habit. In fact, the whole fabric of secular society is being rent with this “new cult of madness.” And Christians? Is our way of life simply an extension of this bent toward mindlessness? Is our faith only a matter of the heart? Do we turn off our brains when we turn on to God?*

Consider the above in light of a culture where: visual stimuli appealing to the emotions rule over thoughtful content;<sup>1</sup> for many, texts and DMs pass for substantive writing; religion appeals to feeling over intellect;<sup>2</sup> we are not surprised to hear of a university student at a conference in Europe who, upon learning of a protest at his home university in Australia, said in despair, “I wish I were back home. I’d have been in it. What’s it all about?”

Now that you’ve had a chance to reflect, I’ll tell you that the above quotation first appeared in print more than fifty years ago on the cover of the first edition of John Stott’s *Your Mind Matters* (1972). The student’s statement is also from Stott’s book (1st ed., p. 8; 2nd ed., p. 14).

Previously, I called attention to T. R. Glover’s thesis that the earliest Christians conquered Greco-Roman religion because they refused to compromise and then “out-lived,” “out-died,” and “out-thought” the pagan world. To do the latter, they “read the best books,” “lived the freest intellectual life,” and knew they “had to be able to give the reason for [their] faith.” “Who did the thinking of that ancient world?” Glover asked. “Again and again it was the Christian” (Glover 1917, 204-205).

Their attention to the mind’s importance derived from the example of Jesus and the apostles. In Ephesians 4.17-24, for example, Paul prepared for his elaboration on Christian moral practice (4.25-6.9) by contrasting the pagan life, characterized by futile minds and darkened understanding, with the new life where believers would “be renewed in the spirit of your minds.” His emphasis is also evident in Philippians where the verb φρονέω (*phroneō*) is used ten times (of 26 in the NT). It means, “1. to have an opinion with regard to someth[ing],

## To see if it is so

“Many Jesus scholars of the last two centuries have of course thrown Scripture out of the window and reconstructed a Jesus quite different from what we find in the New Testament. But the proper answer to that approach is not simply to reassert that because we believe in the Bible we do not need to ask fresh questions about Jesus. As with God so with the Bible; just because our tradition tells us that the Bible says and means one thing or another, that does not excuse us from the challenging task of studying it afresh in the light of the best knowledge we have about its world and context, to see whether these things are indeed so. For me the dynamic of commitment to Scripture is not ‘we believe the Bible, so there is nothing more to be learned,’ but rather ‘we believe the Bible, so we had better discover all the things in it to which our traditions, including our ‘protestant’ or ‘evangelical’ traditions, which have supposed themselves to be ‘biblical’ but are sometimes demonstrably not, have made us blind.” ~ N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (InterVarsity Press, 1999), 17

## Seriously demanding

“I believe I am not mistaken in saying that Christianity is a demanding and serious religion. When it is delivered as easy and amusing, it is another kind of religion altogether.” ~ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (Penguin Books, 1985), 121

“For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?” ~ Luke 14.28

*think, form/hold an opinion, judge*; 2. to give careful consideration to someth[ing], *set one’s mind on, be intent on*; 3. “to develop an attitude based on careful thought, *be minded/disposed*” (Bauer 2000, 1065). The NRSV rightly and consistently translates *phroneō* in Philippians as “think” or “mind.”

1.7 - It is right for me to *think* this way about all of you, ...

2.2 - ... make my joy complete: *be of the same mind*, having the same love, being in full accord and *of one mind*.

2.5 - Let the *same mind be* in you that was in Christ Jesus.

3.15 - Let those of us then who are mature *be of the same mind*; and if you *think* differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.

3.19 - Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their *minds are set* on earthly things.

4.2 - I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to *be of the same mind* in the Lord.

4.10 - I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have *revived your concern* for me; indeed, you *were concerned* for me, but had no opportunity to show it.

In his introductory chapter, Stott quoted Mordecai Richler’s incisive statement on the danger of mindlessness for the broader culture; it’s every bit as timely now: “What scares me about this generation is the extent to which ignorance is their armour. If know-nothingness goes on much longer, someone will yet emerge from a commune having discovered... the wheel” (Stott 1972, 2nd ed., 14-15).

In a world where logic remains a dirty word and thinking is still a bad habit disciples need to re-double our efforts to consider the implications of the New Testament’s emphasis on the mind and what it means for our belief, teaching the church, and influence in the world. To adapt Glover’s question, “Who will do the thinking of this modern world?”

May the answer again and again be, “the Christians.”

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## Works Cited

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> To better appreciate the victory of image over substance in our culture, see Postman’s (1984, 44-80) analysis that includes a comparison of content-centered advertising in previous eras and image-driven advertising today.

<sup>2</sup> Glover (1917, 189) also noted this feature of Greco-Roman religion.

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