

San Juan church of Christ

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What Does God's Word Say About... Teaching Intellectuals

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Christians should have concern about the intellectual laziness when it pertains to man's understanding of scripture. Religious beliefs, for many, do not originate through a personal investigation of the Bible but come as a result of what their parents believed, or what their priest or pastor tells them to believe. The Bible teaches us of the "nobility" of a certain people who, when they heard the apostle Paul preach, "received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). They did not believe Paul just because he was a well-known apostle and preacher, but understanding the seriousness of the subject at hand [the salvation of their souls], they put the sermon to the test by a diligent search of the Scriptures. If many today would follow the example of these noble-minded people there would be no divisions [denominations] (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Paul taught those who did not believe in the one true God and professed to be highly educated in his time with God's wisdom (1 Cor. 2:13). How did he preach to those who were highly educated? The answer is found in the 17th chapter of the book of Acts. Athens was one of the great centers of learning in the ancient world. Scholars were constantly seeking to "tell or hear some new thing" (Acts 17:21). They were intellectually curious so they invited Paul to speak to them on Mars Hill. Paul told them "what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23). In modern times this would not be a tactful approach, accusing intellectuals of ignorance! He preached to them "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth (Acts 17:24). When Paul preached of God, he never tried to "prove" His existence by science. He did not depend on philosophy as a basis for his preaching. He simply affirmed there is one God, Creator of the world and everything in it! Can this approach really work with intellectuals?

The question of the "origin of life" occupies philosophers today in endless speculations. Evolutionists who try to explain the "first cause" of life can never find or explain it. Paul answered this with one statement from God: "He Himself gives to all people life and breath" (Acts 17:25).

Paul continues the sermon about God with another bold statement: "for in Him we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28). God still sustains all life and without His constant care no life could exist (Hebrews 1:3). The reaction of these intellectuals is the same reaction that we would have from intellectuals today; they "mocked" him (Acts 17:32). It was too much for educated people to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, which is common of "educated" men today (1 Cor. 1:18-22). The gospel today, as it was in Athens, will be rejected by many who trust in their own wisdom. But, the gospel is still "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16).

For Christians, spiritual wisdom can be found in the Scriptures to refute any false teachings by men (2 Timothy 2:15). Those in the secular world can also find wisdom within God's word (Proverbs 1:7).

Please send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:
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