

Isn't Faith the Opposite of Reason? Ephesians 4:17-25

Perhaps somewhere amidst the clutter of your mental furniture is the idea that people once believed the earth was flat. I mean it isn't that long ago that it was a commonly believed that if you sailed far enough you would fall off the edge – right? “Thank goodness,” think the people who propagate this fiction, “that we have come so far since those dark days of religious superstition and ignorance.” Of course, this is all nonsense.

Certainly, by around 600BC, *Pythagoras* had come up with the idea of a spherical shape for the earth. By 240 BC *Eratosthenes* had measured the earth's circumference. By the time of Jesus it was a commonly accepted view of the world. Soon *Ptolemy* was to work out the system of longitude and latitude. Knowledge continues to grow and inform as we now see pictures of the earth from space and we continue to learn.

Despite this we regularly hear people trot out the argument that, just the day before last week, people thought the world was flat. It is a useful, if lazy, way to dismiss anything religious as simply a vestige of those dark days when the world was flat, the sun orbited the earth - and God was in his heaven. It is an excuse for dismissing the challenge of faith and caricaturing 'believers' of every stamp, but especially Christians, as superstitious throwbacks.

But the Bible highly prizes reason and understanding and condemns ignorance:

“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, you must live no longer as the Gentiles do, in the *futility of their thinking*. They are *darkened in their understanding* and separated from the life of God *because of their ignorance...*”

In God's scheme of things futile thinking is out, understanding and enlightenment is a much-sought-after commodity, and ignorance robs us of life.

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; *to be made new in the attitude of your minds;*” - Ephesians 4:17-25

It is the mind that is renewed in the Christian, as Paul pointed out to believers in Rome:

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, *but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*” - Romans 12:2.

In this process we become more like our creator as we, “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” - Eph.4:24 c.f. Col.3:10.

"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body." - Eph. 4:25.

Now we see that some Christians give the impression that becoming a Christian means never having to think again. However, Christians, with new minds, need not indeed dare not show ignorance before a world that watches us for excuses to reject God on the basis that Christianity is irrational and unreasonable.

The New Testament leader Paul wrote about renewed minds, putting off ignorance, enlightened thinking and speaking truth. This surely is encouraging to anyone seeking intelligent and thoughtful answers to the big questions of life. However you define faith then, whatever you're past experience or preconceptions, Christian faith is an intelligent faith. We urge everyone, therefore, to think about the things of God and seek understanding and enlightenment.

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