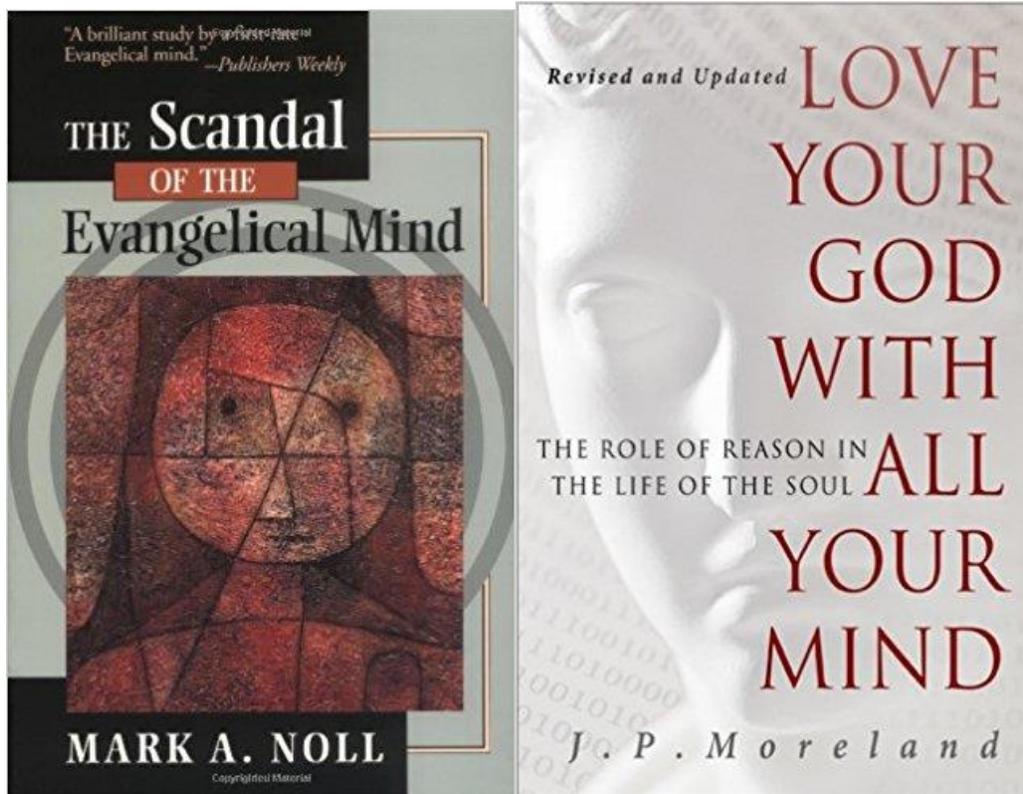


**Daily Life with Christ. Understanding brain addictions (23): The 7 curses of Contemporary Christian anti-intellectualism.**



This is the last article in this series. It is also the most difficult to write for many reasons. One might naturally ask, ‘What does anti-intellectualism have to do with brain addictions?’ Or ‘what does anti-intellectualism have in common with drug-induced and behavior-induced brain addictions?’

Recall that we have noted the three key areas of the human brain: the prefrontal cortex where our soul actualizes our thinking, our nucleus accumbens where our soul experiences pleasure, and the VTA (ventral tegmental area) where the soul actualizes the production of dopamine (our craving molecule)—for illustration see <http://www.fbcweb.org/Doctrines/010418.pdf>.

When man lives rationally—has a healthy brain—his prefrontal cortex is the dominate center and thus he enjoys the life of the mind, a mind that is the source of pleasure in the nucleus accumbens as well as the proper operation of VTA—proper desires.

However, in an abnormal brain, man lives more like an animal in that he is dominated by abnormal and irrational cravings produced by the VTA in order to feed a numbed nucleus accumbens. Moreover, these cravings inhibit activity in the prefrontal cortex. In other words, instead of the prefrontal cortex, the rational part of man, governing his life, his thinking becomes a slave to his desires. His brain has been hijacked by his cravings. In such a state he is no longer able to live and thrive as God intended, as a free human being. He lives as a slave to his cravings

and increasingly loses ability to enjoy life because his cravings increase while his ability to enjoy them are numbed. In sum, he is less free as he is driven by cravings that increasingly bring less pleasure—which only promotes more vicious cycle of frantic search for pleasure and happiness. Truly, this is no way to live.

The fact of the matter is that anti-intellectualism is a behavior that changes the brain in similar ways that we have noted with the Gambler's Brain and porn brain. In sum, the person lives by feelings rather than rational thought.

There are three reasons that make talking about anti-intellectualism so difficult. The first is that it is easily misunderstood. *Being anti-intellectual is not about how unintelligent a person is. It is not about one's I.Q. Again, it is not about how smart one is.* Anti-intellectualism is all about mental orientation. In anti-intellectualism, a person lives by his feelings, which then bribes the mind into rationalizing poor choices governed by fleshly desires. The feelings in the brain hijack and inhibit thinking in the brain.

The second reason it is difficult for me to write about anti-intellectualism is because of how defensive people get when they might be guilty of being anti-intellectual. When people hear “anti-intellectual,” they often think one is calling them stupid (which goes back to the first reason) and react very negatively. Deep down everyone knows it is wrong for a human being to be anti-intellectual, not to live rationally.

The third reason that makes this article difficult is because of the deplorable anti-intellectual state of contemporary Christianity. I agree with Christian leaders and thinkers who have warned us for decades that the anti-intellectualism in Christianity will have pernicious consequences. We are now living in those horrible consequences. Of all of the negative consequences, of which there are many, the worst is the loss of ability of the believer to love God with all of his mind. In anti-intellectualism, the believer lives by feelings instead of by Truth (whole truth, total truth), in every area of life: God, marriage, family, friends, politics, local church). It is not surprising that the largest churches today are doctrinally heretical. Christians wishing to hear a feel-good prosperity message gather in droves to listen to preachers who teach false doctrine. For the anti-intellectual Christian, it really is all about his feelings, not truth, and not the real Jesus Christ.

Again, Christian philosophers have warned us about anti-intellectualism for many decades. Many books have been written on the subject. While an unbeliever can be excused for anti-intellectualism, there is no excuse for any Christian to be anti-intellectual. Anti-intellectualism is a disgrace to the name of Christ. Anti-intellectualism is an ugly stain on contemporary Christianity.

J.P. Moreland, a Christian philosopher, notes seven characteristics that psychologists have identified with the “empty self,” which is the result of anti-intellectualism (see his “*Love God with all Your Mind*,” 88-92):

1. The anti-intellectual is inordinately individualistic. In anti-intellectualism, there is no sense of the virtue or duty to others or to community. A person becomes a self-contained individual who defines his own goals and lives with little to no sense of responsibility to

others. They are usually not part of a local church, for example. Self-contained individuals do their own thing and seek to create meaning by focus on self, not realizing that self is a very poor site for meaning. It is always about how they look or who loves them.

2. The anti-intellectual is infantile. The infantile person is controlled by infantile cravings and constantly seeks to be filled up with and made whole by food, entertainment, and consumer goods. The anti-intellectual never grows up; he remains an adolescent for life. Such a person is preoccupied with sex, physical appearance, and body image and trends to live by feelings and experiences. Pleasure is all that matters, and it had better be immediate. For the anti-intellectual, boredom is the greatest evil, amusement the greatest good.
3. The anti-intellectual is narcissistic. Narcissism is an inordinate and exclusive sense of self-infatuation in which the individual is preoccupied with his or her own self-interest and fulfillment. Narcissists manipulate relationships with others, including God, to validate their own self-esteem and cannot sustain deep relationships to make personal commitments to something larger than their own ego. Anti-intellectuals are superficial as they make themselves the center of the universe. The narcissist evaluates the local church, the right books to read, and the other activities only on how they will further his own agenda.
4. The anti-intellectual is passive. He just absorbs attitudes around him. He lets others do his thinking for him with regard to cultural issues, politics, and even the nature of God and Christianity. From watching TV to listening to sermons, his primary agenda is to be amused and entertained. The passive person is a self in search of pleasure and consumer goods provided by others. Such an individual becomes a shriveled self with less and less ability to be proactive and take control of life.
5. The anti-intellectual is sensate. The sensate life is one that lives by images. The person who lives a sensate life no longer bases decisions on careful use of abstract reasoning in assessing the pertinent issues. This is precisely what we see happening to modern American culture. The widespread emergence of the sensate self has caused more and more Christians to be shallow, small-souled people. It is all about good images and feelings. Pastors and political leaders who can provide the best image captures them—for it is no longer about careful thought. It is just about “good” images.
6. The anti-intellectual has lost the ability to develop an high interior life of virtue, morality, and love, which always require a great deal of inner reflection and spiritual formation—that goes beyond the temporal issues of life.
7. The anti-intellectual often lives a hurried and busy life. It is a life that is gorged with activities and noise. Because the anti-intellectual life is an empty life, it seeks to fill that emptiness with a frenzied pace to keep emptiness and pain suppressed. They must stay busy because they have lost the ability to reflect on the meaning of life and the deep truths of God and Christianity. The anti-intellectual is easily bored, and like the drug

addict he is always looking for some high, some activity to excite them. The anti-intellectual never has time to regularly read books of substance. The anti-intellectual is unable to enjoy quiet time of deep reflection on the beauty of life and the true/good/beauty of the LORD. Any free time that he has will be used for TV and social media.

As J.P. Moreland notes, after listing the above seven characteristics of the empty self of anti-intellectualism, “empty selves are a danger to society and the church. . . The empty self is also the enemy of the Christian mind and its cultivation.” The brain is a terrible thing to waste, whether that destruction is a result of drugs or bad behavior. The chief command, the reason for the Bible and the reason for our existence, “is to love God with all of our minds.”

In Christ,

Pastor Don