

General Topics :: The Balance Between Human Logic and God's Logic (worth reading)**The Balance Between Human Logic and God's Logic (worth reading) - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/6/11 15:14**

While this article is written about homeschool curriculums, I do believe there is much beneficial information in it for all. Take the time to read it...it's worth it.

Part 1

The Balance Between Human Logic and God's Logic

Logic and rhetoric are extremely popular and enthusiastically sought after by those in the homeschool community. The words logic, classical, philosophy, dialectic, and reasoning sound extremely intelligent to our Greek ears. Homeschoolers immersing their children in the study of formal logic have well-meaning motives: It is understandable that homeschoolers want their children to become critical thinkers. We want to be able to defend the Gospel logically. We want our students to learn to evaluate their beliefs and the beliefs of others before they take on a course of action.

But logic and reality are not the same. Logical consistency does not always mean truth.

Human reasoning is limited by human experience. Eve trusted her reason over what God had said and logically concluded that eating the fruit of the forbidden tree was the best choice for her and Adam. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen 3:6 KJV).

Come, let us reason together (Isa 1:18) and look at more examples from the Bible. Is it logical to consider it all joy when you encounter various trials (James 1:2)? Is it logical to believe that God created the earth in six days? Was it logical for Cain to sacrifice fruit of his own work instead of a blood offering? Was it logical for Noah to build an ark where there was no water? Was it logical for man to build the Tower of Babel? Was it logical for Abraham to move away from his family and all he knew based on what he had heard from an invisible voice? Was it logical for Sarah to have a baby so late in life? Was it logical for Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt? Was it logical for Gideon, with the weakest clan, (Manasseh), to save Israel from the Midianites? Is it logical to turn the other cheek when someone slaps you? Was it logical for Christ, who was completely without sin, to give His life for us when we are so full of sin? God has every logical reason to punish us for our sins; but in His grace and mercy, He offered us His pardon through His son.

There is no doubt God that wants us to use our minds. You are reasoning and analyzing now as you read this. Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord (Isa 1:18). The word reason in the Hebrew is a law term used of arguing, convincing, or deciding a case in court. God said, My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6).

The Bible encourages knowledge, understanding, and wisdom as virtues to be sought after. We are commanded to get wisdom and to get understanding (Prov. 4:5, 7; 16:16, see also Ps a. 119:104). Paul prayed for Christ's followers to grow in knowledge, wisdom and understanding (Eph. 1:16-18; Phil. 1:9; Col. 1:9). The Bible speaks negatively of ignorance (Ps a. 73:22; Isa. 56:10; Rom. 10:3; 1 Cor. . 14:38; 2 Cor. 2:11; 2 Peter 3:5). Paul frequently made the statement, I would not have you ignorant (Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13; See also 2 Peter 3:8, 1 Tim. 1:13). The Hebrews, however, never viewed wisdom as merely factual or simply cognitive information. Rather, wisdom was seen as understanding of how to apply knowledge to a specific area. Wisdom began with the ability to see and evaluate all of life from God's point of view (Proverbs 1:7).

Critical Thinking is the ability to look at information, understand it and then determine how it relates to what one is studying and helps express ideas clearly and systematically. A critical thinker uses broad in-depth analysis of evidence to make decisions and communicate beliefs clearly and accurately. The lessons in the Heart of Wisdom unit studies encourage critical thinking skills through sorting, sequencing, selecting, connecting, rejecting, and classifying the information that has been learned.

If we teach our children to become critical thinkers do we really need to also teach formal logic? Logic has limits. Countless problems have been presented to graduate students that arrived at the wrong answer (as defined by the rules of logic) whereas other students arrived at the right answer for the wrong reasons. Logic is not the only means of gaining knowledge and understanding. There is also experience, intuition, direct revelation, inspiration.

Author of several critical thinking books Diane F. Halpern gives the follow fictional vignette that was taken from a real-life debate.

As far as Joan's opponent was concerned, the debate wasn't going well. It was clear from the sea of nodding heads and sounds of "uh huh" and "yeah" that Joan was scoring points and convincing the audience; whereas, her opponent seemed to be losing support every time he spoke. He wasn't surprised; he had been warned. Joan had studied reasoning and now knew how to make people believe anything. Soon she would have everyone convinced that the war was justified and what was wrong was right. The way she's going, she could probably make people believe that day is night. It certainly wasn't fair, but what can you expect from someone who studied reasoning?

We normally think of logical reasoning as an important critical thinking skill—the sort of skill that you would use to make valid conclusions when dealing with information that is complex and emotional. But here one debater accused the other of cheating by using logical reasoning as a trick. Is this the way we want to win a disagreement? What is Logic, Rhetoric and Dialectic?

Formal logic is the study of the principles and methods of argumentation. The study of logic came from ancient Greek philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates. Aristotle (student of Plato, and called "the father of logic") compiled the system of formal logic in use today and wrote a thesis on rhetoric still used in universities today. Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art of persuasion. An argument in logic is a set of statements. Some of the statements serve as premises (or statements of evidence), and others serve as the conclusions that can be drawn from the premises. Syllogism is the most common type of argument form in deductive logic. Example: All German shepherds are dogs. All dogs have are mammals therefore, all German Shepherds are mammals. The conclusion is the final statement; the other two statements are the premises. Aristotle taught that the syllogism was the main instrument for reaching conclusions. Aristotle believed that knowledge of the world could only be obtained through experience.

Dialectic is defined by Funk and Wagnall's Dictionary as the art or practice of examining statements logically as by question and answer to establish validity. The Socratic dialectical method was one of cross-examination. In Plato's dialogues, Socrates characteristically argued by means of cross-examining someone else's statements in order to pull out the contradictions in the other's person's position.

Philosophers and educators have occasionally recommended the teaching of formal logic as a means to critical thinking. Not all educators agree with this theory. Robert H. Ennis's book Philosophy of Education reports although rational thinkers exhibit certain proficiencies, tendencies, and good habits he explicitly rejected formal logic as a method of teaching rational thinking as "too elaborate."

Researches on cognitive processes reveal that there is a great difference between everyday reasoning and the logical system devised by logicians. A great deal of everyday thinking is practical, intuitive and emotional. Thinking in formal logical terms requires explicit training, but it is still difficult for highly educated people, even those trained in logic. Wason and Johnson-Laird had made an experiment called card-tuning to test the ability of adults in formal thinking. The results are so striking that the vast majority of adults including trained logicians not only had got the given problem wrong, but usually had given the same logically incorrect answers.
Human Reasoning or the Bible?

Based on our worldview, our final authority is either human reasoning or the Bible. The same natural human reasoning that the ancient Greeks so venerated is manifest in today's liberal secular/humanistic thinking. Secular liberals believe that all men are searching for truth and every man gets a portion of it, so nobody is wrong and nobody is right. It doesn't seem rational that God would make a Hell; therefore, they believe that there is no Hell. Reason says, "I don't believe what the Bible says because it does not fit with my rational thinking." Or "I can't believe there is a God of wrath, so there must not be a God of wrath."

Oswald Chambers said, "The salvation of God does not stand on human logic; it stands on the sacrificial death of Jesus. Sinful men and women can be changed into new creatures by the marvelous work of God in Christ Jesus, which is prior to all experience."

Should a Christian Teach Logic?

Logic is not pagan or evil. The God-given ability to reason well is a critical thinking skill that is vital in science, mathematics, law, forecasting, diagnosing, and just about every other circumstance. The ability to reason well is of great importance.

Critical thinking skills are not right or wrong. Logic is a skill or a tool like a hammer. A hammer it can be used to build something useful or as a murder weapon. Logic skills can be developed as a tool to defend the Bible or to tear it apart. Are books good or evil? Books can be used to spread the Gospel or promote pornography. Thinking along this line—*s*—are cows good or evil?

* In Bible times domesticated cattle were used by the Hebrews in many ways: as a food source (in 1 Kings 4:23 Solomon's daily household ration included thirty cattle and oxen), as sacrificial offerings (Solomon offered twenty-two thousand oxen in 1 Kings 8:63), to pull carts (Num. 7:3), as pack animals (1 Chron. 12:40), for threshing (Deut. 25:4) and, together with sheep and goats, for milk products and dung.

* On the other hand, the ancient Egyptians worshiped cows. In the wilderness, the Hebrews, looking back to Egypt, built a golden calf to worship. This idolatry brought death to three thousand Hebrews.

* Today the majority of the population in America believes cows are healthy to eat. The average diet includes milk and/or hamburgers. The U.S. beef industry generates an estimated \$175 billion in economic activity

* Some people believe cows are full of harmful antibiotics and poison their body. Medical reports say eating beef has been linked to heart disease, high blood pressure, and strokes. Drinking milk has been linked to asthma, allergies, intestinal bleeding, and juvenile diabetes. Cutting dairy products out of your diet gives you a greater chance of avoiding bronchial, respiratory, and stomach problems.

* The Hindu religion teaches the sanctity of animal life, and while they themselves usually live in abject poverty, the animals among them are maintained in idleness. Over 50% of the India population is malnourished while large portions of government funds go to for food, shelter and the medical needs of the cows.

The answers to our questions will depend on who we ask, and their worldview and their reasoning. We can't always trust human reasoning, especially in moral and spiritual matters. But this fact does not negate the importance of reasoning. BU it does show us how important it is to understand worldviews.

It is essential to adopt the attitudes and dispositions of a critical thinker when studying the Bible. Author Marvin Wilson asks excellent critical thinking questions of the Bible such as, "What is the inner world of biblical thought? What is the cultural mind-set of the authors of Holy Writ? Are we to understand the Bible chiefly through the eyes of Hellenism or through the eyes of Judaism ?

Basic Bible hermeneutics contains logical principles that must be applied in order to correctly understand the Bible—*w*ho is the author, when did he live, what is his point of view, what was the cultural and historical setting of the time in which he wrote, to whom was he writing, and in which language was we writing?

Now, we have validated that reasoning is an important skill but we must also recognize that there is an innate weakness in human logic. Logic means correct reasoning, but following logic does not always produce a valid conclusion. If there is not enough information or wrong information is in the chain of reasoning, the conclusion will be wrong. Paul says, We know in part (1Cor 13:9), and we see through a glass darkly (1 Cor 13:11 KJV). Problems arise when we trust logic more than God or His Word. It's really a matter of motivation, priorities, and balance.

Marvin Wilson describes the difference between block logic and Greek logic in Our Father Abraham:

The use of what may be termed block logic is another important contour of Hebrew thought. Greek logic, which has to a large extent influenced the Western world, was different. The Greeks often used a tightly contained step logic whereby one would argue from premises to a conclusion, each step linked tightly to the next in coherent, rational, logical fashion. The conclusion, however, was usually limited to one point of view—the human being's perception of reality.

By contrast, the Hebrews often made use of block logic. That is, concepts were expressed in self-contained units or blocks of thought. These blocks did not necessarily fit together in any obviously rational or harmonious pattern, particularly when one block represented the human perspective on truth and the other represented the divine. This way of thinking created a propensity for paradox, antinomy, or apparent contradiction, as one block stood in tension—often illogical relation—to the other. Hence, polarity of thought or dialectic often characterized block logic.

It is particularly difficult for Westerners—those whose thought-patterns have been influenced more by the Greeks and Romans than by the Hebrews—to piece together the block logic of Scripture. When we open the Bible, therefore, since we are not Orientals, we are invited...to undergo a kind of intellectual conversion to the Hebraic world of the East.

Let us turn, then, to some of the many examples of block logic found throughout Scripture. The book of Exodus says that Pharaoh hardened his heart, but it also says that God hardened it (Ex. 8:15 ; cf. 7:3). The prophets teach that God is both wrathful and merciful (Isa. 45:7 ; Hab. 3:2). The New Testament refers to Jesus as the "Lamb of God" and the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Jn. 1:29 , 36; Rev. 5:5). Hell is described as both "blackest darkness" and the "fiery lake" (Jude 13 ; Rev. 19:20). In terms of salvation, Jesus said, "whoever comes to me I will never drive away," yet no one can come "unless the Father draws him" (Jn. 6:37 , 44). To find life you must lose it (Mt. 10:39). When you are weak, then you are strong (2 Cor. 12:10). The way up (exaltation) is the way down (humility) (Lk. 14:11). "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13 ; Mal. 1:3).

Consideration of certain forms of block logic may give one the impression that divine sovereignty and human responsibility are incompatible. The Hebrews, however, sensed no violation of their freedom as they accomplish God's purposes. Upon a more careful reading of the biblical text, one can often observe that the Bible views one block from the perspective of divine transcendence—God says, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart"—and the other from a human point of view—"Pharaoh hardened his heart" (Ex. 4:21 ; 7:3,13; 8:15). The same is often true of Scriptures which deal with the themes of predestination/election and free will/ human freedom.

In sum, the Hebrew mind could handle the dynamic tension of the language of paradox, confident that "all is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven"...Divine sovereignty and human responsibility were not incompatible.

The Hebrew knew he did not know all the answers. His position was "under the sun" (Ecc. 8:17), so his words were few (5:2). He refused to over-systematize or forced harmonization on the enigmas of God's truth or the puzzles of the universe. He realized that no one could straighten what God has made crooked (7:13). All things, therefore, did not need to be fully rational. The Hebrew mind was willing to accept the truths taught on both sides of the paradox; recognized that mystery and apparent contradictions are often signs of the divine. Stated succinctly, the Hebrews knew the wisdom of learning to trust God in matters that they could not fully understand.

While philosophical and structural divisions of learning obviously have an important role to play in contemporary education, our Western culture—especially on most levels of secular and Christian instruction—has provided little understanding concerning the nature of Hebrew thought. Thus we have the natural tendency to impose more rational and systematic categories of thought on the Bible. The Bible, however, tends to reject most carefully worked-out charts and thoroughgoing attempts at schematization. Neither God nor his Word may be easily contained in a box for logical or scientific analysis.

Both God and his Word have a sovereign unpredictability that defies rational, human explanation.

The Semites of Bible times did not simply think truth—they experienced truth...truth is as much an encounter as it is a proposition...To the Jew, the deed was always more important than the creed. He was not stymied by language that appeared contradictory from a human point of view. Neither did he feel compelled to reconcile what seemed irreconcilable. He believed that God ultimately was greater than any human attempt at systematizing truth. Walking in truth (2 Jn. 4) and living the truth (1 Jn. 1:6) were a higher priority than rationally analyzing the truth. In the words of the renowned biblical scholar Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, "We are practical. We are more interested in discovering what God wants man to do than we are in describing God's essence...as a teacher, I never try to solve questions because most questions are unsolvable." He concludes, "Judaism is never afraid of contradictions...it acknowledges that full reconciliation of the two is possible only in God. He is the coincidence of opposites." (Wilson, p. 150-153).

Re: The Balance Between Human Logic and God's Logic (worth reading) - posted by tjservant (), on: 2008/6/11 15:16
Part 2

The Balance Between Human Logic
and God's Logic

The Hebrews of Bible times believed that "walking in the truth" (2 John 4) and "living the truth" (1 John 1:6) were a higher priorities than rationally analyzing the truth.

The classical Greek education model focuses on literature and logic.

The biblical Hebraic education model focuses on God's Word and faith.

Sample of Man's logic:

Now they said: Come now! Let us build ourselves a city and a tower, its top in the heavens, and let us make ourselves a name, lest we be scattered over the face of all the earth ! (Genesis 11:4)

Sample of God's non-syllogistic logic:

God said, Nevertheless, Sara your wife is to bear you a son, you shall call his name: Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as a covenant for the ages, for his seed after him . (Gen 17:19) Sarah became pregnant and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set-time of which God had spoken to him. (Gen 21:2) He said: Pray take your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac, and go you forth to the land of Moriya and offer him up there as an offering-up upon one of the mountains that I will tell you of. (Gen 22:2)

Don't We Need Logic To Defend Christianity?

According the rhetorical and argumentative standards of Aristotle and the other humanists, every argument had to be answered.

According to God: Remind them about these things, solemnly calling on them in the presence of God not to argue about words, since that is of no use and tears down those who listen. Do your utmost to let God see that you at least are a sound workman, with no need to be ashamed of the way you handle the Word of Truth. Avoid all that profane jargon, for it leads people still further into ungodliness (2 Tim. 2:14-16).

Teaching Critical Thinking

I used A Case of Red Herrings with my children to improve their thinking skills. It's a book on critical thinking that teaches the student to follow lines of reasoning, generate hypotheses, analyze information, test possibilities, and look beyond the obvious. It involved reading short mystery stories where some of the clues gave a false lead. It was fun and educational. The children learned how to note key words and understand critical thinking. We used the book to improve study skills.

You can teach critical thinking to your children daily while studying God's Word. One way is by asking open-ended questions to clarify their ideas and beliefs. Ask them what they mean when they comment on a passage. Question their comments to discover their assumptions to find if their ideas line up with what Scripture teaches. Challenge them to validate their ideas with evidence from another portion of Scripture. Ask for examples of how they have practiced or applied the information. Ask your students to narrate or rephrase a thoughts or passages.

Finding the Balance

Knowledge and understanding and diligent study are of utmost importance for believers. But we also see the problems with large amounts of time devoted to the study of formal logic.

A good test of our priorities is how we spend our time and money. If you spent curriculum money on books on logic but have no Bible study tools in your library, you probably need to rethink your priorities. If you spend two hours at night planning logic lessons and an hour each day teaching logic, but only spend 15 minutes in Bible study, you need to rethink your priorities. Pray about priorities and balance. You will never go wrong when you immerse yourself and your children in studying the Word and in solid biblical teaching.

General Topics :: The Balance Between Human Logic and God's Logic (worth reading)

Nothing in our life—not logic, nor math, nor language, nor literature, not even family or church—should have the top priority over the Word of God. When some thing replaces the lordship of Christ, that thing can become idolatrous and cause us to be susceptible to spiritual disaster.

There is an account of an old recipe for chicken which started out with this instruction: "First catch the chicken." The author of this recipe knew how to put first things first. It all comes down to established priorities—we put the things that should be in first place in their proper order.

Article and End Notes found (<http://homeschoolinformation.com/logic.htm>) here

Re: The Balance Between Human Logic and God's Logic (worth reading) - posted by clintstone (), on: 2008/6/14 13:42

i do simply know that being reasonable is a characteristic of christians ,and not leaning to our own understanding and fearing God . i love the scripture, He makes wise the simple, simply put , sin is never constrewed in scripture as constitutional,and as something that we christians have or will be doing in some degree until we escape from when we die. i know that i have the 7 spirits of the spirit of the lord described in isaiah 11;2, what more do i need to know,? nothing but reliance on Jesus. i like your post , " just look to Jesus the author,perfecter, and finisher of our faith{commitment}

The Balance Between Human Logic and God's Logic (worth reading) - posted by crsschk (), on: 2008/6/15 10:47

"Food for thought" ...

Anything that will get us thinking. Very good brother, it takes some thinking just to absorb all this.

Quote:
-----By contrast, the Hebrews often made use of block logic. That is, concepts were expressed in self-contained units or blocks of thought. These blocks did not necessarily fit together in any obviously rational or harmonious pattern, particularly when one block represented the human perspective on truth and the other represented the divine. This way of thinking created a propensity for paradox, antinomy, or apparent contradiction, as one block stood in tension—often illogical relation—to the other. Hence, polarity of thought or dialectic often characterized block logic.

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Very interesting and helpful.

Quote:
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Re: The Balance Between Human Logic and God's Logic (worth reading) - posted by clintstone (), on: 2008/6/16 18:33

hello ,tj i have just read this again, and i like it and i agree with most of it . i like oswald chambers quote.I have a main aim and that is knowing the difference, i pray always on knowing the difference between Gods thoughts and my thoughts. it's not logical to think that we can have a new heart and a new mind ,and a new and living way into the holiest of holies, where nothing that defiles can get in. but i know by exsperience and the bibles logic ,both , that the blood {life} of Jesus is powerful enough to remove all sin from us, in this life now.that's all my point has been. holiness unto the Lord. thanks for your post. God bless you richly, clint