

Non-Contradiction.

In his endnote 4, Dr Johnson disputes my analysis of 1 Cor. 13. First, he commits the fallacy of hasty generalisation when he claims that 'people do not use natural language that way [logically]'. Well, I 'use natural language that way' and so do others, so it logically follows that we are not people (*reductio ad absurdum*). And I explained that if people do 'use natural language that way', it means that Paul really did move mountains and give his body to be burnt, and that Jesus really did cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub.

Many of Dr Johnson's arguments confuse the truth or falsity of the premises with the validity of the reasoning. I made it clear that logic can be misused if anti-scriptural premises are used. The problem with Greek 'wisdom' was the faulty non-monotheistic axiom, not the logic. Also, it's not that 'people cannot understand the "logic" that required Jesus's sacrifice for our sins'; rather, they are ignorant of certain biblical premises that entail this:

- God is perfect justice, meaning sin must be punished (Hab. 1:13);
- Sin against an infinite God requires infinite punishment (Ps. 49:8-9);
- The punishment must be endured by the sinner or by a Substitute (Is. 53);
- The Substitute must be sinless or else he would need to pay for his own sins (Heb. 7:26);
- The Substitute must have the same nature as the sinner — man (Rom. 5:15, Heb. 2:14 ff.);
- The Substitute must be God, as no creature could endure the infinite punishment we deserve (Acts 2:24, 1 Pet. 3:18), and only God can restore us to life (2 Tim. 1:10).

I don't know why Dr Johnson thinks 'God can appear unfair (e.g. Matthew 20:1-16; Luke 19:24-26)' — a logical response is that this presupposes a premise that man is in a position to judge God.

Another point Dr Johnson seems

to have ignored is that logic is the relation between *propositions*. Sometimes analysis is needed to determine the proposition which is being asserted, maybe in a figurative way. After this, logic should be applied.

The same points apply to his claim 'ruthless logic fails when consistently applied to human relationships.' The fault is either with faulty or misunderstood premises or invalid deductions from true premises — i.e. with faulty logic, not logic *per se*.

Dr Johnson's support of (unnamed) unbelievers who claim that 'many biblical statements are inconsistent with formal logic' is without foundation. So many alleged examples of biblical 'contradictions' adduced by unbelievers demonstrate their lack of logical understanding. A good example is Proverbs 26:4-5, where he claims the two statements nullify each other under 'Aristotelian' logic. Not at all — proverbial literature is never *intended* to teach absolute rules. In this case, the two proverbs constitute a *dilemma* — there are problems in both responding and not responding to a fool. But their *intention* is clearly the two following commands:

- Do not answer a fool according to his folly if answering him thus would bring you down to his level;
- Answer him according to his folly if not answering him would give him the conceit that his arguments are unanswerable.

Nothing contradictory about these.

As I wrote, a *contradiction* has the logical form $p \sim p$. These proverbs have the logical form $(p \supset q) \cdot (\sim p \supset r)$.

And if a formal system of Christian theology has antinomies, the fault is the logical deficiency of the systematizer, not an indication that the Bible is not logical. Unfortunately some theologians think it is somehow more pious to believe in illogicalities. But as the Christian philosopher Dr Gordon Clark (1902-1985) used to say, *A paradox is a charley horse between the ears — removable by*

rational massage.' And again, Dr Johnson is guilty of hasty generalisation here — how would he know that all systematic theologies have 'antinomies' unless he had examined all of them?

It is a mistake to equate logical and scientific laws. I pointed out that science relies on the formally logically invalid principle of *induction*, and that using verified prediction as 'proof commits the fallacy of affirming the consequent.

I didn't discuss scientific laws in the 'Logic' paper. But in various articles and talks, I have pointed out that scientific laws are *descriptive*, not *prescriptive*. They are our *descriptions* of the way God regularly sustains His creation. They no more *cause* anything to happen than the outline of a map causes the shape of the coastline (many Christian philosophers have argued thus).

In conclusion, I stand by my paper arguing that logic is essential for Christian faith, morality and evangelism. Logical thinking is an outworking of being created in the image and likeness of God and having 'the mind of Christ', the *logos*.

Jonathan Sarfati
Brisbane
AUSTRALIA

References

1. Adam immediately died spiritually, i.e. he was separated from God, and the process of decay began which led to physical death, just as the warning (literally 'dying you shall die') said.
2. Carson, D.A., 1996. *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd Ed., Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, USA and Paternoster Press, Carlisle, UK.

The days of Genesis

In his letter The Days of Genesis' in *CENTJ* 12(1):37-38, Dr Shackelford says, 'I would remind each of us that an Earth millions or

billions of years old is not a fact of science but a theory of science' (emphasis in original).

It is, perhaps, a minor point, but I would contend that this belief is not even a 'theory', but is of much lower status. Perhaps it is an assumption, or a conclusion drawn from extrapolations, themselves based on assumptions. It might be an inference from selected data viewed within a certain set of presuppositions about those data, or merely a presumption. After all, to propose that it is valid to extrapolate a process back billions of years from which to draw conclusions that the Earth is billions of years old one must first assert the reality of those billions of years.

Reading further in the letter I find that I am in substantial agreement with his position opposing Dr Helweg's view that the Creation record in Genesis 1 is a statement of whom and not how. This reminds me of those who attempt to explain away New Testament miracles by unusual or peculiar conjunctions of natural processes and features in an attempt, usually futile, to make them acceptable to our atheistic contemporaries.

Dr Helweg's and similar proposals however, make little sense, I consider, for one who believes in the God of the Bible. It is as though there must always be a method of achieving the outcomes God wills which conforms to our expectation of what that method might be. We generally, and wisely, do not take this approach to the New Testament miracles. We do not say that the miracle at Cana tells us who made the water into wine instantly, not how it was done. Well, actually, we are told how it was done: by the word of God. What prevents this method being that employed in the creation of the universe, as Shackelford points out in his reference to Psalm 33:6?

David A.M. Green
Thornleigh, New South Wales
AUSTRALIA

An infinite universe?

I recently encountered a belief that seems very common among Christians. With the exception of educated young earth creationists, most Christians seem to believe that the universe is unbounded and infinite. There actually seems to be a fear among Christians of a universe that has a boundary. 'If there's an edge, then what's out there?'

I was raised in church and home schooled, and until I read Dr Russell Humphreys' book *Starlight and Time*, I never questioned that the universe was unbounded and infinite. Since secular books and shows in the popular media say or imply that the universe is infinite, I think I picked it up from one of these sources. All it takes is for someone who seems credible to say that the universe is infinite one time, and from then on the average Christian will believe that the universe is infinite.

Many Christians argue that an infinite cosmos shows the infinite nature of God. One dictionary defines the universe as being infinite, or having boundless regions.¹ The same dictionary defines God as being infinite, unbounded or unlimited. Can this be? No other creation is equated with the Creator. Why should the universe be an exception? Equating the universe with God borders on pantheism! *'To whom then shall ye liken me, or shall I be his equal? saith the Holy One'* (Isaiah 40:25).²

The Bible says in numerous places that the universe has expanded. For example, Isaiah 40:22 says, God *'... stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.'*³ If the universe has expanded, then the universe must have a boundary of some sort. Something that is infinitely large cannot get any larger. Where is it going to go?

The Bible also states that the universe will collapse at sometime in the future. Isaiah 34:4 says, *'... the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll.'*⁴ In order for something to get smaller it must have a boundary. The infinitely large cannot become any smaller. There is no centre for it to collapse to.

When I have confronted Christians on this issue, some reject a bounded cosmos immediately, even vehemently. The idea that the universe is unbounded appears to be a case of 'vestigial thinking',⁵ useless thought patterns left over from evolutionary indoctrination. The universe being finite is a scary thought to the unsaved, but Christians have no reason to be frightened by the infinite God who is bigger than the universe and is *'... upholding all things by the word of His power...'* (Heb. 1:3)

Jesse Huso (age 17),
Hardin, Montana,
UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA

References

1. The word *infinite*: The Random House College Dictionary, revised edition, 1984, Random House, Inc.
2. See also: Isaiah 40:18, Psalms 89:8.
3. See also: 2 Samuel 22:10, Job 9:8, 26:7, 37:18, Psalms 18:9, 104:2, 144:5, Isaiah 42:5, 44:24, 45:12, 48:13, 51:13, Jeremiah 10:12, 51:15, Ezekiel 1:22, Zechariah 12:1.
4. See also: Hebrews 1:10-12, Revelation 6:14, 20:11.
5. I owe this turn of phrase to my mother, Anna Huso.