

Is reason a good or bad thing?

Some parts of the church celebrate reason and intellectualism to the exclusion of the simple; even though God targets the simple for blessing (Ps 19:7; Prov 21:11). Other parts of the church denigrate reason with gusto. Martin Luther ridiculed reason with very earthy speech while Charismatics demand that all reason is thrown out of the window and people accept wild irrational experiences. What are we to think? The truth is that reason or rationality is both good and bad depending on the situation in view.

The Charismatic demand to 'Drink and not think' is utterly unbiblical. By this is meant to accept untested experiences and abandon self-control by first becoming mentally passive. This is both unbiblical, mystical and dangerous. We are commanded to exercise self-control at all times; indeed it is a fruit of the Spirit. Luther's condemnation of reason was part of his argument with doctors of the Roman Church who made the explanation of salvation a dry intellectual pursuit. Luther championed the Biblical truth that faith in Christ's work was the root of our experience of salvation and that human wisdom or rationality played no part in it since faith was a divine gift to the elect. No amount of reason was worth one act of simple faith in Christ.

However, Christianity is rational in many ways; even our worship is to be rational (rather than irrational) as Paul explains in Rm 12:1, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.*' The word 'reasonable' (*logikos* from *logos*) here means following reason, logical. The word 'service' (*latreia*) means the service and worship of God. Christians are never told to ditch their brains, but are commanded to think and be renewed in their minds (Rm 12:2). We must consider truth, reason out doctrines, examine all things and discern what is right; in short to exercise our mental capacities (Heb 5:14).

However, we must always be humble and submissive to God. There are times when our reason fails us and we must accept the truth even if we don't understand it fully. Some doctrines are unfathomable to finite minds, such as: the two natures of Christ, the oneness yet threeness of the Trinity, or the eternal predestination of free agents. Faced with a divine mystery, we must submit to the clear word of scripture in faith, even if we do not fully grasp the meaning. Our reason is subject to God's word.

So, reason is of no value in conversion since it is by sovereign grace and faith to the elect; however, believers must use the sound mind that God has given them (2 Tim 1:7) to discern good from evil (1 Cor 2:15-16; Phil 1:9-10; 1 Thess 5:21).

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