

Paradox aplenty in the Bible

A letter to Father Dietzen (CR, June 4) on the roles of faith and works raises the neglected issue of paradox.

Since the Enlightenment, human intelligence and linear logic have been so elevated that many have forgotten there is any other form of knowledge. But there are many such forms: history, personal experience, and, for some, paradox.

Math is logical. Chemistry is logical. But human experience is not; much of man's deepest experience is paradox: it is in giving that we receive; love hurts; all of our children are above average.

The Bible is not full of contradiction; it is full of paradox: When I am weak, then I am strong. In dying we live. Faith is all you need, but if you don't feed the hungry you have no part in the kingdom. In the human heart, logic perplexes, paradox reveals.

G. K. Chesterton may have said it best: "The Christian has always cared more for truth than for consistency. If he saw two truths that seemed to contradict each other, he would take the two truths and the contradiction along with them. His spiritual sight is stereoscopic, like his physical sight; he sees two different pictures at once, and yet sees all the better for that."