

## Matt .. (Romans6) Shares Some Insights on the A/B Boundary

There's a distinction worth making here. (LOL- I wonder how many of my posts start out that way?) It's a three-way distinction between (1) the logical consequences of a particular belief, (2) the actual behavior of that individual given that person's current beliefs, and (3) the reasonableness of an individual holding a particular belief given certain evidence.

Let's step away from A/B for a moment and just consider another question over which Christians differ: say, infant baptism.

Person 1 believes that baptism is only appropriate as an expression of personal faith in Christ, and so infants should \*not\* be baptized.

Person 2 believes that baptizing infants is the duty of believing parents and that it may even be efficacious for salvation (or something to that effect- details aren't critical here). Therefore, this person believes that all believing parents \*should\* baptize their infants.

(Other positions are clearly possible, but don't factor in to what follows, so I'll leave them out.)

Person 1 and 2 hold exactly opposite beliefs. Both cannot be ultimately true (although both could ultimately be false). But notice that in each case, the logic of the belief itself compels it to apply universally. It would be irrational to hold the belief that no infant should ever be baptized, but that it's morally ok for some people to baptize their infants, and vice versa.

However, reasonable people also understand that not everyone holds the same beliefs. Therefore, as long as Person 1 understands Person 2's views on the matter, it would be irrational for Person 1 to expect Person 2 to refrain from baptizing his/her kid. Note that this does not require Person 1 to affirm the morality of Person 2's choices, but it does acknowledge that they are reasonable choices to make given Person 2's beliefs.

Things get messy when Person 1 and 2 try to understand \*why\* they hold their particular beliefs. Each one will point to certain supporting evidence and attempt to refute certain opposing evidence, but unless they're talking about math or logic, it's unlikely that the evidence alone will produce unanimity. But notice that even here, the questions are not about "why do you do such-and-such action?", but rather, "why do you believe that such-and-such action is good or right?"

Connecting this back to A/B, in case it isn't already obvious: I think it would be absolutely foolish of SideBers to expect SideA people to become (or remain) celibate. And in my observation, precious few are making that claim. Many do, however, believe SideA people should become SideB. That is, they believe that if confronted with the same evidence, SideAers' beliefs would change, and that change in belief would yield a concomitant change in behavior. Notice that that's crucially different from expecting people to act in ways that are contrary to their own beliefs!

This also cuts the other way. There are hopefully few SideAers here who would encourage SideB people to become romantically or physically involved with a same-sex partner in ways that would violate their current beliefs. But there are many SideAers who believe that, if confronted with the appropriate evidence, SideBers' beliefs would change to SideA, along with a concomitant shift in behavior.

By recognizing this distinction between the logical outworking of one's own beliefs in contrast to the behavior of other people given their beliefs, I think we can diffuse a lot of the tension between the "sides". And I think we can eliminate the remaining tension by seeking to understand why it is that many of us reach different conclusions from the same evidence. In such efforts, it's important to avoid trying to prove one's own case, and focus instead on trying to understand the other's view- asking questions when things don't make sense.

There are very few places where those discussions can happen in a way that sheds more light than heat, but I believe that GCN is one of them. That's why I find it so frustrating when A/B discussions degenerate into debates and proof-texting, because in my 10 years here, I haven't seen any good come from that. But I have seen quite a lot of good come from the other approach, and I hope that will continue for many years to come. –Matt