

Faith versus Feeling



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Regular readers of this blog have already caught onto one thing: The Bible addresses a radically different culture than that of America today. Indeed, the world of the Bible is like an alien planet. In the Bible, everyone was under one feudal system or another, and it was assumed that this was consistent with human nature itself. Your first thought in many situations would have been regarding what your feudal obligations demanded of you.

The Bible itself assumes that everyone serves someone else in one way or another. It wasn't always simple, as feudal authorities could easily overlap and conflict, and often did. It was a complicated calculus of what you owed to whom. While this remains true today, it is often invisible now, masked under various mythologies and pretenses about individual freedom. In other words, we are still dominated by others; we only imagine that we are free, or that we ought to be free.

Do you understand that the Beast in John's Revelation was not so much a particular government (i.e., Rome), but a particular *kind* of government? It's one that seeks to deny and displace all feudal authorities, seizing total control over everyone in some detailed fashion that God revealed was flat out wicked? The trick was to convince everyone that they were individuals with no feudal obligations, only so that the central State can seize total control in a far more convenient environment. Reducing the obligations of the State machinery to wade through layers of feudal authority means totalitarianism. Individual freedom is a complete lie.

A critical element in understanding the feudal nature of our human existence is realizing you still must sort out the question of what you owe to whom. A critical element in the State's big lie of individual freedom is that there are no valid claims tribal affiliation and identity aside from that of the State. Sure, you are encouraged to exercise your tribal instincts by scattering your individual identity across a host of nonbinding fan-club affiliations, but the State claims sole ownership of your actual allegiance in terms of real control.

Thus, the lie of cosmopolitan identity dominates western moral awareness. Only the State is permitted to decide who is and isn't your "neighbor" in the biblical sense.

What this does is destroy the integrity of the sense of divine election. You aren't permitted to cling to your covenant body as your true national identity in this world. Instead, your church is merely one more corporate entity that provides entertainment rather like a football team, but less important (if we go by common practice). Preachers have long piously noted that people are far more deeply committed and loyal to their sports team than to their church.

Churches that buck this trend are typically called "cults". In truth, the only cult-like flaw here is that churches insert themselves in the role of Christ without actually manifesting His teachings. Churches are generally organizations, not spiritual families, never mind the rhetoric. Instead, churches act more like the secular state than biblical feudal families. Churches participate in the socio-political conflict instead of teaching their people to withdraw from it. This is what we mean when we suggest that most churches are "worldly" -- they are far too close to the world's way versus the spiritual way. Church teaching is cerebral, not moral.

But the State's demand that you give equal *agape* to sinners is by far the most dangerous part of this. We have been taught to feel guilty when we fail to love every random wicked sinner the same as we do our closest spiritual friends.

On the one hand, biblical languages offer more nuanced words regarding the care we invest in others than English does. This confuses things enough, but then our western civilization makes way too much of the feeling called "love" when the Bible emphasizes something else: commitment (AKA, faith). Indeed, the Bible makes it a point to ignore the feeling of love altogether except to refer to it as a confusing lust of the flesh. I challenge you to do a word study in Hebrew of the words translated in English as "love". Read those words in context; the emphasis is not the feeling but the commitment.

Meanwhile, we desperately need to disengage from our emphasis on the feeling often associated with the English word "love". This is especially true in dealing with outsiders. The churchian teaching that we should "love sinners but not the sin" is a highly perverted notion compared to what Scripture actually says. In the Bible, your feelings don't mean much, and you need to develop a strong sense of that. Your feelings will get you killed, but worse, following the lead of your feelings will defile your whole life.

It's not that we replace feelings with reason; that's a false dichotomy. Those two cannot be separated. The problem is that old lie of Western Civilization that associates your heart with your emotions. In the Bible, your heart is the interface between your flesh and your spirit. If your spirit remains dead, then your heart is blind. It still works as the seat of your commitments, but without a resurrected spirit, your heart has no clue what it should trust. But if your spirit is alive in Christ, then you must invest your sense of awareness in your heart as the only path to knowing Him.

When you are committed to Christ, you offer compassion for sinners. Not a feeling, but you obey Christ in extending mercy to see how they react. You don't invest your feelings in their existence; you should remain emotionally disengaged. In good moral conscience, you cannot care much for someone who doesn't love your Lord. But there remains the command from our Lord to offer compassion and mercy as a beacon for

the lost Elect, who will tend to look just like any Damned soul out there until the Lord touches them.

Again, it's not cold reason. It's the strength of your faith -- your feudal submission to Christ -- that compels you to offer mercy to the sinners around you. You hold a morally privileged position as emissaries of Christ. You are bending down to offer mercy to someone who by no means deserves it, but surely needs it. You offer only what Christ puts in your hand for this task, not what some external agency demands of you.

Emotional engagement is a side effect, not the central matter of our interaction with others. We should have affection for our brothers and sisters in the Covenant insofar as we can see Christ in them. Let your feelings follow behind your spiritual-moral awareness; feelings never take the lead. You don't "love" sinners. And don't play silly semantic games about the meaning of the word "sinner"; it refers to people who do submit to Christ. Hebrew thinking does not invest much thought in the substance ("being") of what we are. That's a Hellenistic obsession with no place in faith. The Hebrew language pays attention to what role you play in any given context based on what you do.

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