

EMOTIONALISM VS SCRIPTURAL EMOTIONS¹

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INTRODUCTION

Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines "emotionalism" as "...unwarranted expression or display of emotion."² The same dictionary defines "emotion" in the following words:

Any of the feelings of joy, sorrow, fear, hate, love, etc....any strong agitation of the feelings actuated by experiencing love, hate, fear, etc., and usually accompanied by certain physiological changes, as increased heartbeat, respiration, or the like, and often overt manifestation, as crying, shaking, etc.³

Clyde Narramore defines emotion as follows: "An experience or mental state characterized by a strong degree of feeling and usually accompanied by motor expression often quite intense. Any of various complex reactions with both psychical and physical manifestations as fear, anger, love and hate."⁴

The Bible student immediately recognizes the validity of emotion in Christianity in such terms as joy, sorrow, fear, hate, love, and even anger. These all have their part in the thinking and behavior of Christians. Emotion is also related to such elements as sincerity and enthusiasm. However, another term in the definitions that catches our attention is "feelings." Surely, none can confuse with Christianity a religion which does not involve the feelings of the individual!

The question, then, is not whether one's emotions ought to be involved in his life as a Christian, but to what degree should they be involved?

EXAMPLES OF EMOTIONALISM IN RELIGION IN GENERAL

An illustration of emotionalism and the excesses to which it can lead is seen in the antics of the 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kin. 18:25–28). They cried unto Baal an entire morning, they leaped about their altar, and they cut their flesh in their religious frenzy. Another illustration of ultra-emotionalism in religion is Shakerism, the sect founded in England in the mid-eighteenth century. It is so called because of the frenzied dances its devotees practiced when they became emotionally stirred.

A great religious “revival” took place on the Kentucky frontier at Cane Ridge in 1801. An estimated 20,000–30,000 people came from all directions to hear eighteen Presbyterian preachers, plus several Methodist and Baptist preachers. The “conversions” were more like “convulsions.”⁵ The preaching produced excessive emotionalism which resulted in bizarre behavior in the hearers. This included screaming loudly, then falling to the ground for several minutes as if dead, violent jerking of various parts of the body, causing one to grunt loudly and which usually evolved into dancing to the point of collapse, and a laughing and singing session.

In more modern times emotionalism in religion is generally identified with Pentecostalism. When I was a child Pentecostals were commonly called “Holy Rollers” because they would sometimes get down in the floor and roll about in their unrestrained emotionalism. Such practices in their assemblies as swaying back and forth, raising the arms and vibrating the uplifted hands, crying out spontaneously with “hallelujahs” and “praise the Lords,” and speaking in an unintelligible gibberish which they describe as “ecstatic utterance” (and mistakenly identify with the gift of tongues in the New Testament), are all manifestations of emotionalism gone to seed. The latest demonstration of such hyper-emotionalism is the “uncontrollable” laughter of the “happy church” phenomenon among certain Pentecostal groups.

EXAMPLES OF EMOTIONALISM AMONG BRETHREN

Some General Indications

Sad to say, the church of the Lord is not free of those who thrive on emotionalism and who cannot seem to rise above the sensual and animal level of it. One of the earliest excuses made for introducing instruments into worship in 1851 was that organs and bass fiddles would "...add greatly to the solemnity of worship, and cause the hearts of the saints to be raised to a higher state of devotion...." ⁶ This demonstrates the way the attempt to stir the emotions has been confused with "spirituality" in the minds of some for a long time. Since at least the late 1960s some brethren have been aping the sects in their religious emotionalism, bringing these into congregations where they were allowed to do so. The imbibing of false doctrines concerning the direct operation of the Holy Spirit was behind much of this.

Some have alleged that they were "nudged" by the Holy Spirit to go to a certain street corner where they met a stranger they could teach. Sheer emotionalism (rather than spirituality or the Scriptures) led them to such things as dimming the lights, lighting candles, burning crosses, humming or singing during the Lord's supper, engaging in "responsive readings," "testifying," changing the order of worship every week, and doing away with a Gospel sermon in the assembly in favor of an insipid panel discussion. An elder in one church even suggested moving the Lord's supper from the assembly to the Bible classes because the small groups would make it "more spiritual." Clearly, such folk could not distinguish between "spirituality" and "emotionalism."

Emotionalism and Worship

The drift away from respect for Biblical authority since the 1960s has precipitated a major digression and apostasy from the Truth in every direction. A prominent part of this

falling away has been the assault on Scriptural worship by the liberals, an assault which springs to a great degree from emotionalism. The rantings of two of these outspoken religious rebels is representative of many.

At the 1990 Nashville “Jubilee” Marvin Phillips went out of his way to ridicule and destroy respect for structured Scriptural worship. In this speech he really set the benchmark for advocating that we operate solely on the emotional level in worship. His topic, “Putting Celebration Back Into Worship,” gave to the perceptive a clue to what he would say. According to one brother who heard the tape of this lecture and wrote a review of it, he spoke as follows:⁷

1. He talked about their “special singing” groups, “Heaven Generation Singers” and “Spirit,” that performed during the Sunday morning worship at the Garnett Church in Tulsa where he preached at the time. He also told of the presentation of an American flag by a Boy Scout troop in the same assembly and declared that God wanted such things there.

2. He ridiculed the five items of Scriptural worship and said, “Deliver us from whoever taught us that.”

3. He ridiculed the idea of saying, “It’s time to begin our worship.” (Apparently he believes in the heresy that suggests that everything a Christian does is worship.)

4. In a blasphemously revealing statement, he said, “Church is always supposed to be a party.” He went on to make a mockery of worship by saying that while someone was **singing** “Amazing Grace” someone else might in the same assembly be **hugging** a sister named “Grace” and telling her how much he loves her.

5. He declared that the return of the prodigal son in Luke 15 was really a description of a “church service going on.” He used this to advocate music and dancing, claiming that of the twenty-three times dancing is mentioned in the Bible, only

five times is it condemned, and then only because the dancers had the wrong attitude! (Guess who he thinks the elder brother who objected to the music and dancing represents in the church today? You are right if you suppose it to be all of us who oppose the liberal agenda of these apostate innovationists.)

6. He held the Pentecostals and other charismatics up as examples of how to grow. He said they were growing, not because of their doctrine, but because of “celebration, warmth, love, feeling.” (Please note how he is pushing unvarnished emotionalism here.) In the same context he implied that doctrine is unimportant because people do not care about it as long as they are made to feel good.

7. He pontificated that it is Scriptural both to tithe and to clap the hands while doing so. However, he urged people to **really** turn their emotions loose when a congregational financial goal is exceeded. Not only is it fine to clap, but to jump up and down!

8. He said we need to “rethink” music in worship and “reconsider special music in our worship services.” By this he means the use of such things as solos, quartets, and choirs. He made some of the same arguments against congregational singing that those who use the instrument have used for generations. Why does he want to use the special music performances? My judgment is that he wants to use this as a means of breaking away from what he perceives to be drab and boring worship. In other words, he wanted to put some spice and some excitement in it. In a word, he was aiming at what will appeal to the senses and the feelings—raw emotionalism.

9. He praised the Acappella singing/instrument-mimicking group and Jeff Walling, pointing out how they could draw crowds. All who have kept up with these fellows know that their chief appeal is that they are adept at stirring the feelings and emotions, especially of the youngsters who attend their performances. Those in the Acappella audiences are encouraged (and often comply) to dance in the aisles, sway, and clap to the “gospel music” of the group. Jeff Walling is somewhat like a cheerleader of a pep

rally with a little religion thrown in on the side. The emotions are stirred, but the souls are not fed with the bread of life. In fact, what they are fed at such youth rallies is often downright poisonous.

The other reprobate who has done his part to move the church toward unmitigated emotionalism, especially in worship, is Rubel Shelly. He has made enough heretical statements since the early 1980s to serve as subject matter for a large set of books. We will notice some excerpts from only two sources: (1) the speeches he made at Richland Hills Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, February 3–4, 1990⁸ and (2) *The Second Incarnation*, a book he co-authored with Randy Harris.⁹ (At the time they collaborated on this book, Harris was teaching in the religion department at Lipscomb University in Nashville. He later joined the religion department at Abilene Christian University.) Consider the following forays into absolute emotionalism:

1. He talked much about the need for “renewal” and “invigoration” from the Holy Spirit, saying, “...we’ve got to be open to the Spirit of God and we have to seek the fullness of the Spirit of God.” He went on to say that whole churches must be open to the Spirit, letting Him move among the members.

2. He depicted the church’s worship practices as “tired” and “uninspiring” and said we must make way for an “exhilarating experience.”

3. He opined that worship should be an existential moment, an existential experience, an existential event. (For “existential,” read “subjective,” “feelings-oriented,” “the event or experience of the moment,” all of which heavily depend upon sheer emotionalism.) He called worship “a mysticism” and said that “rationalists” (referring to us old mossbacks) have forgotten that the heart must be in worship.

4. He said that worship must become an “encounter experience” with God, a “holy **WOW**.” He contrasted this with getting to the assembly and “going through a boring

routine, predictable, you know what's coming next...the sermon is about as remote from life as can be. It addresses the 1940s **Head On.**" He continued: "If you understand who God is, worship is spontaneous and unavoidable...it's [for the second time, DM]the holy **WOW.**"

5. He denigrated the songs we sing in worship, calling them the "stuff we do in our music." He said many of them were not worth doing because they are "theologically abhorrent and obscene" (There's nothing subjective or emotional about that outburst, is there?). In place of the old songs he praised "contemporary Christian music" as "wonderful" and said we needed to get it into our worship.

6. His description of a "confession" period, followed by the pronouncement of "absolution" is a combination of the emotionalism of a Pentecostal meeting crossed with the high church dogma of Roman Catholicism. Here is his description of the way they did it at Woodmont Hills in Nashville, where Shelly preached at the time: Shelly announces there will be a period of confession and tells God there are some who need to "do business" with Him and that He needs "right now" to listen to them. Shelly then confesses **to** God **for** those who are doing wrong things in their families, for those carrying such "secret vices" (he dare not say "sins" lest someone feel guilty, DM) as alcoholism, homosexuality, and greed. After confessing their "vices" for them, he then does a "priestly absolution" (his words, DM) over them. This is followed by a song, such as "It Is Well With My Soul" (What, an old "traditional" song rather than a "contemporary Christian" number?), sung by a choir, a soloist, or the congregation (which, it matters not to Shelly). I would not be a bit surprised if they dimmed the lights and had the choir do a little humming to create just the right atmosphere for this "community confessional"! Such things, he avers, will "break some calcified molds." I trust that the reader will not miss observing the foundation of utter emotionalism, rather than Scripture upon which this idiocy rests.

7. Shelly and Harris write that our “tired, uninspiring event called worship... must give way to an exhilarating experience of God.” Furthermore, worship in churches of Christ (except Woodmont Hills and similar superior congregations, of course) is “scandalous” and “dull and boring” to him and his ilk and “unattractive to non-Christians.” The way to overcome this is to replace it with “raucous celebration,” “spontaneity,” “hubbub,” “shouts,” “dances,” “jubilation,” “applause and cheering,” singing by “one person or a small group to the larger,” “dramatic celebration of God,” and “a narcotic trip into another world.” Again, please note that all of these are grounded in subjective opinions which confuse what pleases God with the selfish desires of men, all of them rooted in emotionalism.

8. Who is responsible for all of this nonsense suggested in the name of “worship”? Why, the Holy Spirit, of course! To those who would object to such foolishness, they say that we must not “...stifle, close off creativity arising from the Spirit of God.” All of these wonderful innovations in worship are due to the “...invigorating presence of the Spirit’s fresh breezes.” They go on to say: “When the Spirit of God is present, it will not always be possible to determine the atmosphere in advance. Leaders may intend and prepare for a service of one sort, and God may bring about another end to his glory.” They declare further: “We must allow the Spirit of God to quicken our assemblies with freshness and life.” Only those who are utterly blind spiritually can fail to see that they are taking the traits of unbridled emotionalism run amuck and ascribing them to the Holy Spirit of God.

Emotionalism in Preaching

In addition to the injection of emotionalism into worship by the liberals there is the excessive use of emotionalism by some preachers. This influence is also coming from liberals, as I have already demonstrated in the discussion of the push for emotionalism in worship. The instance in which Shelly described his confessing the sins of the

congregation and then absolving them is a case in point. The appeal of many liberal preachers, especially of the younger set such as Jeff Walling, is that they are “so dynamic”! Never mind the shallowness or outright error of their message, there are some who must have an entertaining and what they consider to be a “dynamic” man in the pulpit to hold their interest. All of this is based on emotionalism in both the preacher and the hearers. However, to be fair, not all of the emotionalism in the pulpit is coming from those who are trying to turn the church into a “do your own thing” religious democracy. Preachers who are doctrinally sound have also been known to engage in antics and exercises aimed more at the emotions than the intellect.

Emotionalism in Reaction to the Truth

A third manifestation of emotionalism is seen in the reactions people register to various doctrines and practices of the Bible. All who have studied the Bible with those who believe and/or practice some sort of religious error have often observed such reactions. Upon learning that one must be baptized in order to be saved, one may vehemently argue with the plain statement of Jesus and the apostles (Mark 16:15–16; Acts 2:38; et al.). Such will often then claim that they **feel** that God is too good to condemn all those who have not had an opportunity to be baptized. So also with the Truth on instrumental music in worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), observance of the Lord’s supper every first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7; et al.), or any number of subjects.

The typical response of Pentecostals who claim to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit or to possess spiritual gifts (e.g., speaking in tongues) is for them to say that they **know** they have experienced these things because they **feel** it is so. They may even go so far as to say piously that they would not trade the **feeling** they have “right here” (with hand over heart) for a stack of Bibles! Likewise, the young men who style themselves as Mormon “elders” and who ring our doorbells testify that they **know** that Joseph Smith

is a prophet and that the *Book of Mormon* is inspired because they **feel** a “burning in their breast” confirming these things (of course, it may just be indigestion!).

Not infrequently a person who has been brought to a recognition of the Truth and what he must do to be saved will refuse because in his mind it will be some sort of condemnation of his beloved father or mother who died outside of Christ. All such reactions are entirely emotional and represent an actual desertion of rationality.

Through the years I have seen many brethren react totally on an emotional rather than a rational level to a given truth or practice in the law of Christ. In 1971, I accepted the invitation of an eldership to preach for a 1,200-member church in San Angelo, Texas. Both they and I thought that they wanted a Gospel preacher to work with them. Both of us were mistaken, as it turned out. The church facilities were adjacent to Angelo State University, at which the congregation supported a “Bible chair” program. I learned after moving there that the Bible chair director had sometime before said in a sermon that he could not tell the students that instrumental music and such things as drinking and smoking were wrong. Further, I learned that he was making periodicals from liberal brethren and even Pentecostal sources available to the students.

When I insisted that this man either be called upon to publicly repent or be dismissed, the atmosphere in the elders’ meeting became very heated. One of the elders was a prominent local attorney and a close personal friend of the Bible chair director. When it became evident that there was some strong sentiment among some of the other nine elders to deal with this man, the elder-attorney (the same one who suggested moving the Lord’s supper to the Bible classes) finally said, “I don’t care what he has done or said. He is my friend and I’m going to defend him. I will resign if you are determined to confront him.” At that, he walked out the door of the meeting room. (He was allowed to come back to the next elders’ meeting without a word being said about his “resignation.”) He prevailed, and I left after seven months, knowing that the situation

was hopeless. Ironically, here was a man who was trained in his profession to think rationally and logically, but it is evident that he was operating on one level only in this matter—emotionalism.

The same reaction often occurs when it is necessary for the church to withdraw fellowship from one of its members. I was first involved in a case of this sort in 1974 when I served as the local preacher in Carlsbad, New Mexico. An ex-preacher had moved there from elsewhere before we moved there. He was a notorious heretic (he had even written a book urging fellowship with the denominations) and had repeatedly disrupted Bible classes with his false doctrines and had even written letters to many members of the church, seeking sympathy and sowing discord. He refused the repeated pleas of the elders that he repent or else be withdrawn from. Accordingly, the elders asked me to preach on “church discipline” on a given Sunday morning, after which one of them read a withdrawal announcement when the erring brother did not respond to the invitation. At the end of the announcement one of the members of the church stood up in the assembly and challenged the right of the elders to lead the church in the withdrawal proceedings without consulting the entire church. This man and his wife and another family or two then took the withdrawn-from brother and his wife out to lunch that day in a show of support for him, in spite of the Bible teaching he had just heard, which included the admonition, “with such a one no, not to eat” (1 Cor. 5:11)! This brother completely disabled his rational faculties and reacted solely on the basis of his feelings for someone who he mistakenly thought was being persecuted.

Anyone who preaches very long and stands for the Truth is going to encounter irrational and emotional reactions to what he preaches, and brethren often among those who thus behave. The social drinkers, wearers of immodest apparel, and dancers often react this way to doctrine that exposes their practices as sinful, even to the dividing of congregations in some cases. The couple living in an adulterous marriage will rarely

listen and submit to what the Son of God says about their spiritual condition, but will throw up all sorts of emotional smokescreens as to why they should remain together. The list of such subjects and the emotionalism that prevails in the hearts of brethren concerning them could be extended almost indefinitely.

LIBERALISM, EMOTIONALISM, AND RATIONALITY

In the Secular World

One of the building blocks of liberalism, whether social, political, or religious, is unbridled emotionalism. The political liberal does not live in a real world. He lives only on a “feelings” level. He has a “bleeding heart” for every sob story. He professes his desire to feed all of the hungry, provide a house for all of the homeless, clothe all of the naked, and give everybody a guaranteed annual income, whether or not they have earned it or deserved it. The **feeling** of compassion is what matters, along with verbal expressions of their good intentions. Their duty is thereby done.

While compassion is one of the beautiful traits of the Master we are to emulate and we are certainly under the mandate to help the helpless (Gal. 6:10), we are not to do so without qualification or condition. The liberal would help all of these unfortunate ones without questioning their worthiness as long as he can do it with someone else’s money. He is oblivious to the Bible principle of “no work, no eat” (2 The. 3:10). He does not hesitate to give someone money for food, although the recipient has wasted his money to buy tobacco, alcohol, or some other kind of drug.

The attitude of the liberal is that every person should be able to choose to waste his own life and even the lives of others and suffer no consequence for it. Rather than being held accountable for his behavior, he should be rewarded, supported, and even honored. The super-emotional liberal has too little sense to realize that the victim, not the offender in cases of assault, needs to be helped, and the offender, not the victim,

needs to be punished. Because of sheer emotionalism the social and political liberal opposes just punishment, including the death penalty, for convicted felons. To liberals down is up, out is in, black is white, left is right, and evil is good, all because they live in their touchy-feely, delusional, and warped little dream world that defies rationality and realism.

In the Religious World

Emotionalism long ago took over “Christendom” in general. I can confidently rest my case for this assertion by citing one well-known slogan: “It makes no difference what you believe, as long as you’re sincere.” Several generations have now grown up on this slogan. Many of those in our time have taken it one step further by reasoning, “If it makes no difference **what** I believe, then why should it make any difference **if** I believe?” Hundreds of theological seminaries have for years been staffed with thousands of infidel theologians who have produced tens of thousands of infidel clerics who stand in pulpits every seven days and vomit up their unbelief on the millions in the pew. Thus a vast number in a nation originally founded on faith in God and the Bible as the Word of God, are at worst seeking to make Him an outlaw and fugitive from this republic, or at best are living as if He does not exist. These are some of the bitter fruits of the exaltation of emotionalism, which breeds liberalism in religion.

The same culprit is responsible for the wildfire of liberalism in the church of the Lord. Theological liberalism, whether among brethren or those on the outside, is little more than universalism with a thin skin pulled over it. In his heart, the liberal does not really believe in Hell (some brethren have actually come to the point of openly embracing a denial of Hell as described in the Bible). If he does, he does not know anybody who is bound for it. Furthermore, he cannot bring himself to condemn any doctrine as “false” or any behavior as “bad,” or, at any rate, “damnable.” He has never met a false teacher, regardless of the heresy he might espouse. He is an ardent

advocate of the “I’m okay, you’re okay” philosophy. He has turned his back on rational and logical thought, which excludes any middle ground between Truth and error. You see, he believes what he does and believes in religion is right, but he also believes that what others do and believe in religion is just as right, never mind that they are directly contradictory! In true postmodern fashion, truth is ultimately plastic, always in flux.

What is right for one may be wrong for another and vice versa. This is precisely the ground occupied by some on the subject of instrumental music in worship. Some say that, while it would be wrong for them to use the instrument, it is right for those in the Independent Christian Church (or other denominations) to use it. It is by such irrationalism that Carroll D. Osburn could write the following:

There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on whether...the Lord’s supper must be taken every Sunday, or whether instrumental music is used in worship. There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who believe that Christ is the Son of God, but who differ on eschatological theories such as premillennialism, ecclesiological matters such as congregational organization, or soteriological matters such as whether baptism is “for” or “because of” the remission of sins.¹⁰

If you do not understand the learned doctor’s high-falutin’ terminology, the short version of translation is this: “Anything goes.” Errors about worship, the Second Coming, church organization, or the plan of salvation are of no consequence. The social liberals responsible for our lax U. S. Immigration laws could learn much from Osburn and those like him (or have they already done so?). In effect, Osburn has opened wide all of the borders, repealed all of the laws, and dismissed all of the officers charged with enforcement of same in the kingdom of Heaven! One of the things that drives Osburn (and doubtless others, especially those in academe) is the fear of being ostracized and ridiculed by their academic peers outside the kingdom for their “narrow-mindedness.”

He gets close to admitting as much in the following statement of his ideal: “Rejecting arrogant exclusivism, Christian fellowship is extended to a broader arena.”¹¹ (I wonder if he rejects Buddhists and Muslims, and if so, would this make him guilty of “arrogant exclusivism”?) The emotionalism behind this statement is evident. He cares not what the Book says about the exclusive borders of the kingdom of God in a hundred passages. His view is based solely on how he **feels** about it and how he wants others to **feel** about him. Consequently, his fellowship “arena” is broad enough to embrace just about everybody, but it is not God’s “arena” if the New Testament means anything at all.

The hundreds of preachers who have adopted one or more of dozens of loopholes for Matthew 19:9 on marriage, divorce, and remarriage (as erroneous as they are ingenious) serve as glaring examples of emotionalism gone to seed. They make appeals to the difficulty of a celibate life, or how “terrible” it would be on children to break up a marriage for the sake of purity and salvation. One mad told me told me that we had to find something different from what he termed the “traditional” view of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. If we did not relax our views, he averred we would soon run out of anybody we could teach and baptize without their dissolving their marriages since so many are living in adulterous marriages. This fellow actually professed to be a Gospel preacher. How is that for “grade A” emotionalism?

A couple came to see me in 1983, asking me to say their wedding ceremony. The young man had been a Christian for several years, but the young lady had learned the Truth and been baptized only a short while before. When I asked if either of them had been married before, he said that he had not, but she said that she had. She further said that if her husband had committed fornication she was not aware of it—this was not the reason they divorced. When I called their attention to Matthew 19:9, the young man said, “We know what the Bible says, but we have decided to get married anyway and just throw ourselves on the mercy of the Lord.” I told elders of the conversation and

their plans. They visited with them and urged them not to get married, for they had no right to do so. They got someone to marry them, and the week afterward our elders led the church in withdrawing fellowship from them. The entire atmosphere surrounding the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage among so many brethren is one of “how do I and others **feel** about it?” rather than “what does God say about it?” As with these areas of liberalism, many, if not most others can be traced to emotionalism as their root.

THE PROPER USE OF EMOTION

As indicated in the beginning of this manuscript, emotions are not innately harmful or evil. God made us with emotional capacities and abilities and even instructs us, sometimes by precept, sometimes by example (and sometimes by both) concerning how to use them. Therefore, just as we have noticed the abuse of the emotions, we must also notice the proper and Scriptural use of them.

Sincerity is an emotion that is required of us by God. The Roman saints were commended because they obeyed the Gospel pattern “from the heart” (Rom 6:17–18). God seeks those who will worship Him in “spirit and truth” (John 4:23–24). To worship “in spirit” refers to the involvement of our spirits in the act of worship. This involvement of one’s spirit has to do with sincerely approaching God. However, we need to notice the balancing force to the emotion of sincerity in our worship—reverence for and obedience to the Truth of God’s Word. The opposite of sincerity is hypocrisy, which is detestable to God (Mat. 23:13–29; 1 Pet. 2:1).

We are to love our families (Rom. 1:31; Eph. 5:25–6:4), our brethren (1 Pet. 1:22), and all men, even our enemies (Mat. 5:44–46). However, God gives us some restraints to balance this love. Our ultimate love must be for God with all of our being (Mark 12:30). This means that in any conflict of love or loyalty, even with our family members, love for God must come first (Mat. 10:37; Acts 5:29). It also means that we cannot encourage them in anything that is contrary to the Divine will (2 John 9–11). To do so

would be to express more love for men than for God and would cause us to share in their guilt.

We are to be kind and compassionate (Eph. 4:32), but not so much so that we practice partiality and respect of persons (1 Tim. 5:20–21) or help the undeserving (2 The. 3:10). Various things provide just cause for the Christian to express the emotion of joy (Acts 8:39; Phi. 3:1; 4:4); however, our rejoicing is not to be without restraint. We are forbidden to rejoice in unrighteousness, but are commanded to rejoice with the Truth (1 Cor. 13:6). Even the emotions of hate and anger have a useful role when properly directed (Psa. 97:10; 119:104; Mark 3:5; Eph. 4:26).

Each of the emotions could be thus dealt with. The common thread running through them all is that they are not to govern us, but we must govern them. This implies the use of the rational and reasoning faculties of the mind that God has given us. It is no coincidence that when one lets his emotions have complete mastery, he by definition has become “unreasonable,” “irrational.” Emotionalism wars against rationality. In expressing the completeness with which men are to love God, the Scriptures teach us to love Him “with all thy mind” (Mark 12:30). This is not the same as the Bible “heart” in this passage, for the Lord listed it separately. The mind in this verse must refer to man’s intellect, his power to think and to reason. It is the mind with which one understands and initially responds to the Word of God, which teaches us how to live. It is only by the rational use of the minds that God has given us that our emotional capacities can be kept under control and used to the glory, rather than the dishonor of God.

CONCLUSION

Human emotions are extremely powerful. They are powerful for good if we control them with our God-given minds in harmony with the Word of God. They are a powerfully

destructive force if we lay aside our rational powers and let them control us. The danger lies not in the emotions, but in emotionalism.

ENDNOTES

¹. All Scripture quotations are from and all citations are in reference to the American Standard Version, unless otherwise indicated.

². *Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1992), p. 467.

³. Op. cit.

⁴. Clyde M. Narramore, *The Psychology of Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1961 reprint), p. 279.

⁵. Earl I. West, *The Search for the Ancient Order* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1949), 1:23.

⁶. West, 1:309.

⁷. Virgil Hale, "Marvin Phillips and 'Jubilee,'" in *Light for Living*, East Corinth Church of Christ Bulletin, Corinth, MS, 11/19/89.

⁸. All quotations are from Goebel Music, *Behold the Pattern* (Colleyville, TX: Goebel Music Pub., 1991), pp. 284–322.

⁹. Rubel Shelly and Randall J. Harris, *The Second Incarnation: A Theology for the 21st Century* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Pub. Co., 1992).

¹⁰. Carroll D. Osburn, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Abilene, TX: Restoration Perspectives, 1993), pp. 90–91.

¹¹. Osburn, p. 64.

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