

The Heart or the Head?

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Heart in our title refers to feelings, (e.g., joy, sorrow, fear, anger, hate, love, et al.). *Head* refers to reasoned conclusions based on evidence.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (Mat. 22:37).

Bible students immediately recognize the validity of emotions in Christianity in the foregoing terms. These all have their part in the behavior of disciples. Emotions also involve sincerity and zeal. Jesus said the greatest commandment includes loving God with all the **heart**. Surely, none can confuse a joyless, unemotional religion with Biblical Christianity.

However, without proper use of the mind, Christianity cannot exist. The Bible addresses man's intellect with such things as commands and examples, and with evidence concerning which he is expected to correctly reason. Jesus also said the greatest commandment involves loving God with all the **mind**. It is thus evident that, to please God, **head and heart** must be engaged.

A "head-only" religion is cold and lifeless, and Jesus condemned it when he said...

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice, and mercy, and faith: but these ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone. (Mat. 23:23).

However, rampant emotion, unrestrained by one's rational powers, amounts to mere **emotionalism**. Such irrationality is not God's way; in extreme cases it may lead to great harm and evil (e.g., tragedies in the name of religion, such as the 1978 Jonestown massacre).

Modern "culture" operates far more on an emotional than a rational basis. Millions of people vote more because of their "feelings" about a candidate than because of a careful examination of his or her qualifications, experience, moral convictions, integrity, or other qualities.

Examples of emotion's triumph over reason in religion have been around for centuries. The 450 prophets of Baal sought his favor by leaping, crying, and cutting themselves in a display of raw (and vain) emotionalism (1 Kin. 18:26-28). Closer to our time, the banal slogan, "It makes no difference what you believe as long as you're sincere," is an example of the heart's ruling the head. The Bible's paramount purposes are to reveal to mankind (a) what to believe

(because it is the Truth) and (b) the necessity of believing (and acting upon) that Truth. One's reaction to Biblical Truth will determine one's eternal destiny.

Some professed believers "feel" that it is too narrow minded to say that Jesus Christ is the only Avenue to God. They see themselves as "tolerant," "kind," and "merciful." They can't bear to be called "bigots" and "exclusivists." These "professors" exemplify emotions run amok; they can lay no valid claim to being followers of Jesus. He said, "No one cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Only when the head triumphs over the heart will one seek, find, and obey the Gospel.

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