



The Reflector

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“Fearfully and Wonderfully Made”

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I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made... (Psalms 139:14a)

God has made us both wonderful and wondrously complex beings. A body and a spirit interacting. Mentally, we are made capable of a wide range of *emotions* all the way from ecstatic joy to debilitating sorrow, deep love and compassion, as well as profound hatred and disdain. We also are given an *intellect* capable of reasoning, processing data that comes to our attention, making a wide range of choices, and solving complex problems needed to function as a person. To put it more succinctly we are capable of *feeling* and *thinking* – with each function affecting the other somewhat. Each may at times suppress the other. Either is capable of dominating the other. It is up to our *will* to determine which is dominant. If we allow *emotion* to dominate *intellect*, we are not much above “natural brute beasts.” (Jude 10; 2 Pet. 2:12). Nor do we want intellect to suppress emotion until we become stoic.

Religious people, like all others, are so fearfully and wonderfully made. Thus, these people usually base their beliefs and practices either on intellectual reasons or emotional feelings. What about Christians? Someone said that Christianity is a “thinking man’s religion.” I agree. It is introduced and maintained in the life of a person through the thinking or reasoning function - the *intellect*. It is a religion for which one must have and give a *reason*, rather than a feeling or hunch. In fact, while love is generally considered to be an

act of the emotion, the most commanded love (agape) in the New Testament is basically an act of the intellect. Of this kind of love, W. E. Vine says, “Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered.” It is not the kind of love that one either naturally or passionately falls into and out of. It is a conscious decision to pursue the best interest of its object. A close synonym would be *loyalty*.

There was a time in the church when preaching and teaching was predominantly directed to the thinking capacity of the hearers. The reasons one gave for his position were intellectual ones, based on Bible knowledge. In recent years the shift has been more toward the feelings. Teachers, after reading a Scripture, are more and more asking how do you “feel” about that instead of what do you “think” about it. Monumental decisions are made more on the basis of feelings than sound reasoning. Love, compassion and gratification are wonderful feelings for a Christian to have and show, but he cannot afford to let them get the upper hand over sound scriptural knowledge and reasoning from the Scriptures. Our first concern should be “what saith the Scriptures” rather than “how do I feel about it.” Our religious faith and spiritual fellowship is not to be determined merely by love and compassion, but by the “traditions” received from the biblical writers (2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6).

Deep feelings (or enthusiasm) can be a powerful force in living for Christ, but unless the restraining and guiding force of a calm, deliberate, and thoughtful Bible research is brought to bear on those feelings then one's faith is headed for shipwreck. ●

"How Great Thou Art"

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

You know, for some reason, "How Great You Are..." would kind of take something away from that song. I was raised on the King James version of the Bible and was introduced to the American Standard version in my late teens. Until the flood of translations of the past few decades I used the KJV as my primary study Bible and used the ASV for comparison. Their use of "Thou, Thee, etc., along with hearing older brethren lead in prayer, is probably the reason that I normally have used these terms in prayer in addressing and speaking of God, both public and private.

The last thirty or so years the predominant practice has become to use "You." I have heard a few older folks criticize the practice. I do not believe the criticism justified. I can as quickly say "amen" to a prayer that addresses God with "You" as I can to one using "Thou."

That being said, I do kind of resent it when someone criticizes me and others, who still use these terms when leading the congregation in prayer, and often saying or implying that we are stuck in the past, undereducated, and opposed to modern contemporary language usage of newer translations.

I have been asked more than once if I knew that in the "Greek" that there is no distinction made between pronouns referring to God and those referring to man. Yes, and I also know that even in the KJV and ASV that "thou" and "thee" are also used to refer to man. (A word of advice to those who study and teach using modern translations. It would be good to keep a KJV and/or an ASV handy. There are subtle differences in "thou," "thee," "you" etc. that are not expressed by

combining them all into the "you" of modern English. One would do well to learn those differences by looking them up in a good dictionary).

Just as a matter of record. The use of "Thou" in addressing God is not necessarily archaic. The World Dictionary gives as its second usage: "2. (usually capital) refers to God when addressed in prayer, etc" (from Dictionary.com).

I just like making a distinction in pronouns addressing God and man. In writing it can be done by capitalizing the word, like it is done in the New King James and some others – even though most grammarians I have read say they should not be capitalized. Admittedly, I am not very consistent in capitalizing pronouns of deity as I write, but I still like the practice. But addressing God as "Thou" or "Thee" is not awkward to me. If you are more comfortable with "You" that is fine with me. I can still pray along with you, understanding what you are saying, and will say "amen" either very softly or out loud, as my custom is, when I can agree with what has been prayed. How ever we address Him we need to do it with awe and reverence. ●

I Have Met Diotrophes

Don R. Hastings.

In 3 John 9, 10, we read, "I wrote somewhat unto the church: but Diotrophes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Therefore, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he doeth, prating against us with wicked words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and them that would he forbiddeth and casteth them out of the church."

The main characteristic of Diotrophes is that he "loveth to have the preeminence among them." Brother Guy N. Woods, in his commentary on the New Testament epistles, wrote, "The word 'preeminence,' (philoproteuon, present active participle,) is derived from philoprotos, a fondness for being first; and is, alas, a disposition too often observable in our ranks today. The spirit

manifested by this man Diotrephes is wholly foreign to the New Testament and opposed to the teaching of the Lord himself. All self-serving and personal aggrandizement must be eschewed and avoided if we would measure to the standard of primitive Christianity” (A Commentary On The New Testament Epistles, Vol. VII, p. 363).

It was the love for preeminence which led to the formation of the Roman Catholic Church. This attitude is prevalent in the Lord's church and is still the cause of much dissension. The predominant characteristic of those who act like Diotrephes is still the love for preeminence. They want their will to be exalted above all others and woe be to anyone who would dare question their decision on anything.

Diotrephes may have felt that the apostle John would have been more greatly honored by the church than himself. His pride would not stand for that to happen. Those, who act like Diotrephes, are inflated with pride. This pride will lead to their spiritual destruction (Prov. 16:18). Pride keeps them from seeing their faults or listening to someone who disagrees with them. It keeps them from asking for forgiveness unless asking for forgiveness helps keep them in power. It causes them to be jealous of another's ability. If they begin to suspect that someone else is beginning to be highly esteemed by the congregation, then they feel compelled to undermine his reputation. They view anyone, who has leadership ability and does his own thinking, as a rival. What great harm this does to the Lord's church! What a great victory for Satan!

Those with the disposition of Diotrephes will split the local congregation if they don't get their way. They will hold grudges. They will lie over and over again. They will claim they have been misunderstood. They will meet privately with brethren to try and persuade them to join their side. What strife and turmoil they cause. Weak brethren fall by the “way-side. “ Some brethren, who were once strong in the faith, may become less active in the Lord's service.

I have met “Diotrephes” in several

congregations and the meetings have not been pleasant. He is not always easy to identify when you first meet him, because he wears other names and disguises his true attitude. He can smile sweetly and do good deeds. He can be very charming until opposed. If he is opposed by someone who has very little influence in the congregation, he may choose to ignore such a one. However, if he is opposed by someone who has some influence, then that one will be severely rebuked by him “with malicious words” (KJV), usually when no one else is around. If the opposition continues, then “Diotrephes” will rebuke him publicly and endeavor to cast him “out of the church.”

I have found this attitude demonstrated in elders, preachers, and occasionally in other members. It is hard for many to take a position of authority without it going to their head. Because of this human weakness, God gave the qualification of “not self-willed” as a trait which must be possessed by a man who is appointed an elder (Tit. 1:7). The “Diotrephes” person is, also, “contentious” and usually “soon angry” (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7). We often pay little attention to these qualifications, but spend considerable amount of time discussing whether a man must have one or two children to be qualified. It is extremely difficult to remove “Diotrephes” after he has become an elder. When he takes over the congregation and exalts himself as the head of the church, then the church ceases to belong to the Lord, for it belongs to him. The brethren become subject to him. Brethren, how can you stand by idly and permit this evil situation to go on? Where is your courage?

Peter said that elders are not to be tending the flock of God by “. . . lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2,3). In the commentary already mentioned in this article, I found this statement, “The words 'lording it over' (from katakurieuo, to rule over others high-handedly and autocratically) suggests an arrogant, domineering spirit, and is here positively forbidden to those who would serve acceptably as elders or bishops” (Ibid.,

p. 125). Elders should be an “ample to the brethren in humility. God will resist all with the attitude of Diotrephes (1 Pet. 5:5,6). No one should ever be made an elder if he has a love for power. Beware of men who campaign for the eldership.

If you choose to reveal the true identity of “Diotrephes “ be prepared for a bitter struggle. He will strongly resent being called “Diotrophes” even though he acts just like the Diotrephes John knew. Be prepared, also, to stand alone. Some brethren may sing about defending the cause of Christ, but really want no part of a battle even though the Lord's church is being torn asunder. Paul told Timothy, “Fight the good fight of faith. . . “ (1 Tim. 6:12). Too many are keeping their spiritual sword in its sheath and not taking it out for use. Are you doing this or are you closing your eyes and saying, “I see no evil”?

I believe the Lord must find it a great abomination for someone to try to usurp His authority! This is an awful sin! How can we expect to find favor in the eyes of the Lord when we have dethroned Him and exalted ourselves in His place? We must remember that He has all authority and we are His bond servants. We are His sheep. We must humbly obey Him in all things. Let us greatly rejoice that we can serve in His kingdom and He will be our Shepherd! Let elders remember that they are shepherds serving under the chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4).

I believe the greatest need, in the Lord's church today, is qualified elders. God, in His matchless wisdom, made elders to be overseers of the flock. He gave qualifications for men to meet who seek the office of an elder (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1). Those, who fulfill these qualifications and are appointed elders, are a blessing to the cause of Christ. Let us “esteem them highly in love for their work's sake” (1 Thess. 5:13). There is no greater work than that of an elder. It is a work which demands tremendous sacrifice, energy, time and wisdom. Elders, do your work well for you will give an account to the Lord of lords (Heb. 13:17).

Preachers, proclaim faithfully the glorious gospel of Christ. Proclaim it in love. Exalt Christ,

but crucify self (Gal. 2:20). Preach to please Christ, not men (Gal. 1:10).

Any of us may possess the attitude of Diotrephes. We are all capable of putting off humility and putting on pride. If we are guilty of this, we cause the Lord to weep and Satan to rejoice. If you have this attitude, repent with bitter tears at once. Call upon God to forgive you. Be very determined that this diabolical attitude will never again dwell in your heart. ●

Creating a God to Our Liking

Paul in describing the course taken by the nations (Gentiles) away from God, whom they once knew and worshiped, said they “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.” (Romans 1:23 NKJV)

Few of us today know anyone who fashions a piece of wood, a block of silver or gold or stone and worships it as their god. The idolatry that most folks we know is that of creating their own mental image of God and worshipping it. Their god varies greatly from the God of the Bible.

A more popular god created in the minds of many is one ...

1. That offers salvation on their terms.
2. That looks only at man's heart without regard to his actions.
3. That allows them to live as they please without ramifications.
4. That allows them to choose a church that best meets their perceived needs.
5. That expects that church to accept them as they are without question.
6. That accepts anything that they think appropriate as worship to Him.
7. That wants them to vocally praise His name without regard to obeying His authority.
8. That wants them to be happy above all other considerations.
9. That will not allow them to go to an eternal hell, no matter what.

Is this the god that you serve?

– eob