

"D'ordinaire nous promenions le desert enchante de notre amour dans un monde ou l'amour n'avait plus de part. Et ces jours-la, il nous semblait que la flamme qui s'elevait en nous quand nos mains etaient liees etait la meme que celle qui dansait dans les vitrines, dans le coeur des ouvrier tournes vers leurs enfants et dans la profondeur du ciel pur et glace de decembre."¹

-JEANNE
(Camus, in Vallete 1969:153)

56. L O V E

¹This is such an extraordinarily beautiful passage that we'll just interfere here and offer a rough paraphrase, which unfortunately lacks the real 'tendresse' of the original:

"Ordinarily we walked the desert enchanted with our love, in a world where love didn't belong. And during those days, it appeared to us that the flame which rose within in us when our hands were joined, was the same as that which danced in the windows, in the hearts of the shoppers turned toward their children, and in the profoundness of the pure and icy December sky."

It was with a visceral shock that I recognized a paraphrase of this lovely story last week. I had purchased a 1950-ish copy of THE PLAGUE in one of the stellar book stores I routinely haunt while hunting for hidden treasures, in this case, the local St. Vincent de Paul junk store. It cost me a quarter which I thought high because the cover was dog-eared. But I did buy it, and started to read. I obviously knew the author was the same, but I did not anticipate that this short story, one of my favorite of this world, would appear.

On page 77, the name Jeanne appeared. That name, because of its association with this short story and Camus, immediately evoked this story, causing me to read the paragraph closely, hunting hungrily for parallels. And they were there. It was the same story and setting, though abbreviated to a single paragraph. The father, a railroad worker appeared. He sat in the corner with his hands on thighs. Both she and her beloved were from the poor quarter of town. They went shopping at Christmas, appreciating the wrapped presents in the merchants' windows. And the sky was cold and beautiful.

And it was cold and beautiful to bridge the gap between the two texts across a 20 year period of time. (This memory is marked for frequent replay during the eternities.)

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INTRODUCTION:

Of all the attributes displayed by the Christ during his life, as recorded in the Bible,² the cardinal one is love. The essential difference between the two Testaments is this alone. True, there are other doctrinal variations, such as the difference in sacrifice laws, etc. But those differences pale in comparison to the boldness of the doctrine of unequivocal, unconditional love. Indeed, the heart of the difference between the OT and NT sacrifice laws is, in fact, the heart. No more law of the jungle.

The incredible meaning of love shows best in His own words:

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

(John 13:35)

Note two things about this tidy little passage. First, the signet of love identifies or marks a person as one of His disciples. The world will recognize men as His when they display love.³ Second, there are no other attributes necessary to become one of His disciples.⁴

So love is paramount to Christ. And that means that it must be for us

² In some of the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical books there are some rather spectacular stories -which may or may not be true- that suggest other things of importance about Christ. But even those are secondary to the notion of love.

³ The problem with this narrow-minded statement is that there are believers in Hinduism, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, etc. who live lives of selflessness and love. I can hear a narrow mind or two suggest that the number in those groups may be small, but I suspect it is no smaller in reality than among the "Chosen" of Christ. If we take this scripture at face value, it means that these good people are His, even though they don't know Him. I like that.

But there is a sneaky little problem with this John passage, a passage that I deeply love anyway. It specifically says that "all men" shall know this thing, which group seems to include "all men". The problem with this term is that it is impossible for Taoists to recognize that a good person is a disciple of Christ when they have never even heard of Christ. So perhaps the scope of the term is really confined by the Christ to mean "men who know of Me and My doctrines." Another stretched option would be to suggest that his meaning here is really intended to describe the status of things in the post-mortals or post-resurrection worlds where He WILL be known by all persons. It is obvious I suppose and hope that we believe He includes all who exhibit the requisite love for fellow men.

(I trust that any ERA advocate digging in this morass does comprehend the usage of "man" here. It is merely the generic Germanic mass pronoun designating "a human being". There is no gender specification implied. Modern German preserves the cognate in phrases like, "Mann kann..." which translates as "ONE can..." There is no intent in "mann" to designate only the male gender at all, and 'man' in English in this particular usage is exactly parallel, both languages being daughters of the same mother. Chairman, postman, salesman, etc. Such a lot of venom over a bald-faced ignorance of one's own language. But it certainly does provide a great deal of fodder for claims of terrible sexism 'even in the language itself!' And this little note may fall on deaf ears that will have no truck with a fact that denies them of a diatribe that covers such a pervasive element in our daily life as our medium of communication. We begin to be embarrassed to be 'man', and cringe when we forget and say 'chairman', even though we don't mean "male person".)

⁴ This is probably a disturbing statement to those, inside of the Faith and Christianity at large, who believe that BAPTISM is what qualifies one for being a disciple. But that is not what Christ said in this passage. What baptism does is allow formal entry into the congregation, which thereby confers certain privileges and rights not otherwise available. But baptism, according to this profound passage, is not the mark of discipleship. Love is. And only when it is shown will one prove that s/he is a true disciple, whether or not a Christian baptism has been performed.

The implication, then, is that anyone of the 5.28 billion people on the earth in 1991 becomes a disciple of Christ IF s/he displays love. And I like that for several reasons. First, it is just an elegant measure of discipleship. Simple and elementary. No need for liturgical sophistication nor doctrinal purity. Just, "Do you consistently show love to those whom you encounter in your life?" And second, I like it because it puts the frenetic missionary movement of the LDS faith in its proper perspective, namely, that movement really is not burdened with the responsibility of converting all mankind. All mankind can, and will when it is ready, convert itself by choosing to be compassionate and kind to their fellows. The Movement is essentially a mechanism for enabling the body of Christ to demonstrate ITS love and obedience, and it becomes a mechanism for enabling the formal church to increase, and lastly and more importantly, ensures a steady supply of dedicated people to carry on.

as well. It is so profoundly important that it seems it should deserve a lengthy discussion here. But almost anything added to elaborate on it would be trite, so we will discuss it briefly and leave it to you to fill in the details of its role in our parched lives in this exiguous world.

LOVE LATTICE:

We need to elaborate a bit here on how love fits into this model. By now any reader will be able to add the note: The effect of love is to transform the spirit matter in some manner. This effect is to shape, alter or form it in a positive way. It is a healthy exercise of our spirit matter.

The one caveat, and a grave one, which attaches to acts of 'love' is that it be sincere. Pretensions and self-deceptions of, or about, love are among the worst sins one can commit, and for two reasons. First, there is negative exercise or effect on a spirit of such an act, and second, there is the impact on the recipient of such. This type of act, false love, probably falls into the category of hypocrisy, absolutely the most abhorrent sin to Christ.

The adulterous woman is simply counseled in love (note, love) with the statement that He didn't judge her either, and the simple advice to not do it again. But the whited sepulchers full of dead men's bones are unrelentingly castigated by a Christ who cannot contain His wrath. Their real sin was not something that is commonly perceived to be so grave as adultery. It is "merely" hypocrisy. Ha.

METATHEORY AND LOVE:

So, onto all acts we undertake, in some magical but inevitable way, there is another little marker, like the one for honesty, attached to our decisions and actions. These markers indicate something about the degree of love embodied by everything we think and do. A sort of parallel track on the recorder that takes down the details of our lives. Then these markers will be read out in a special analyzer when our spirit synapses are emptied and reviewed at the time of final reconciliation. We all hope that the majority of those little markers will be white to indicate that pure, gentle love was involved in our acts.

These markers are identical to those of honesty in a critical way.⁵ These markers are omnipresent. We cannot pretend or cover or hide or bury or deny or any other such thing. They are attached to the recordings of our deeds on a parallel track by a mechanism which is unembarrassingly candid about what it sees, just as is the honesty track. So love actually is not a commandment like tithing. It is one of those metatheoretical

⁵ By this we mean something that is probably obvious, but which bears emphasis. We are commanded to love everyone at all times, and as in the case of honesty, we are unable to take a single measurement of our performance to determine whether or not we demonstrate proper love. Tithing-like laws can be measured by one metric, but not honesty or love. The requirement is on us through our entire metamorphosis and only at the time of the resurrection will it be removed.

We suspect that love, like honesty, might best be fitted into the metatheory rather than the theory. See Chapters 4, 5 and 6 to review this distinction.

preconditions that governs and applies to the entire POS and our life within it here in this life and in the other phases we struggle through⁶.

JEALOUSY AND JUDGEMENT:

One of the greatest problems we have struggled with while trying to reconcile SMD with the present theory of the POS revolves around this issue of love. Given the paramount value of love, as described above, we cannot rationalize the Bible's description of a jealous, angry God.⁷ The way we deal with it, as noted in the preceding footnote, it to simply discard that image, by attributing it to a historical phase that has no modern value. But it obviously isn't that simple, is it.

Part of the reason the image of an angry, jealous God is able to maintain its hold on the Christian imagination is the fact that Christian doctrine holds that there will be consequences to bad choices, i.e. sins. So how do we accommodate **that** requirement, i.e. appropriate punishments for sins, into this model? Three ways, actually:

First, we remove God from the role of punisher, or the one who beats us with stripes for our sins;

Second, we attribute that role to Blind Justice who will have its unredeemed pound of flesh where the sins were not repented of or accounted for by the atonement;

And third, we attribute a portion of the 'punishment' to the mechanical consequence of poor choices on the crystalline lattice of

⁶ In this chapter, you note that we have studiously avoided drawing a connection between 'love' and marriage. That is because love outside of Western Civilization is not the motive for marriage. Finances, political power, and ideologies of various sorts justify and authenticate matches between men and women. Hormones and self-deception play a lesser role in mate selection outside of the world infested with the influences of Hollywood and other maudlin forces that create the image of love as the basis of marriage. Hardly realistic, that.

⁷ This Jewish concept of "Yahu Sabaot" was truly that of terribleness, and curiously, this trait has been cited as one that enabled the Jews to retain their identity after the Diaspora. For example, Elias Bickerman, in FROM EZRA TO THE LAST OF THE MACCABEES, says:

"The Diaspora clung to its unique God and to Jerusalem, the unique center of lawful worship. But at the same time, the God Zion, the "great and terrible God," was not only the God of the Jews; He was the sole God in heaven and earth, the so-called deities of the pagans [Ed: of the countries they were scattered into.] were nothing but vain idols. Hence, the polarity of Jerusalem and the Dispersion had its ideological counterpart in the paradoxical combination of universal monotheism and particularism, in the conception that the sole Lord of the Universe dwells on the hillock of Zion. This theological paradox held the Jews in the Dispersion together, and from all points of the compass they directed their eyes to the Lord's Temple in Jerusalem. (1962:8)

We grant that the major point of the preceding paragraph is tangential to this discussion of love. But we cite it because we believe that it illustrates something important about the Jewish perception of their God. Bickerman indirectly attributes the survival of the Community to its attachment to this God. The point we wish to make here is that this attachment is truly bi-polar because it is based -I believe- as much on FEAR of His anger and retribution and jealousy, as it is on LOVE of Him. The "great and terrible God".

So our modern Christian perception of God's bi-polar nature is fundamentally Jewish. That it remains as powerful an image today as it is must be attributed to the fact that we still use the jealous Jews' Old Testament imbued with Moses' "eye for an eye" view of human relationships. The NT simply is unable to overcome that perspective, a fact that illustrates the astonishing difference between the Testaments.

We would perhaps do ourselves a favor if we worked solely out of the NT. We believe that Christ truly fulfilled the Law and set a new example that really requires a new image, created from His own life and teaching, not from the schizophrenic Jewish hangover. However, even the LDS addition to the Canon conveys the same quality so Brother Joseph, even at age 14, was already conditioned.

our spirit matter.

In this model, then, there are at least two types of consequences to bad choices: First, punishment of some sort will be applied to us for un-repentant sins. Second, our spirit matter will have already undergone a negative transformation as a result of the bad choices we made.

This conception of the POS maintains God in the role of Judge who oversees over the evaluation process. At any point in the judgement where we are required to pay a price, to undergo punishment for un-repentant sins, He will allow Justice access to us. In turn, Justice will exact its due from us, while He quietly observes the transaction with compassion and love, and even grief, that we failed ourselves by making the bad choices that ultimately required some castigation.

CONCLUSION:

The POS is predicated on love and freedom. The latter allows us to exhibit and express the former.