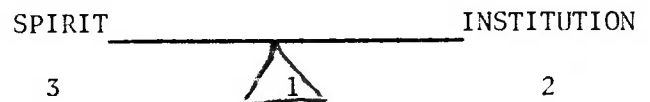


The tension and trade-off between "spirit" and "institution" is human and therefore scriptural. This thinksheet provides a matrix for thinking about this dynamic in light of the biblical concept of "faith" as inclusive of both trust and faithfulness [leal-love, loyalty: chesedh; dependability, reliability: emunah, for which alone LXX uses the basic NT word for this whole concept, viz. pistis and derivatives--and cp. emeth-ale.theia, truth as inclusive of being true to (one's relationships, promises, contracts)]. As faithful-true, God models for us covenant-keeping: Dt.7.9, where the sworn oath is the secular model. He's the primordial promise-keeper: Is.49.7. (and on the opp., viz. threat, cp.Hos.5.9). To get it down to nitty-gritty, I teach that tardiness, to say nothing of absence, is violating the Covenant (and therefore an insult to God) and the contract (and therefore an insult to the group). The biblical formula "love and steadfastness" binds the former (as the substantive content) to the latter (as the formal container): the Bible has only scorn for sentimental love, and defines authentic love as essentially, not accidentally or peripherally, contractual, covenantal, formal, as though it were saying "Love without truth is dead and also deadly, while truth without love is at least the container awaiting the contents." Love of God was never a problem for the passionate Jews: lust-love of life is of their very being, of a piece with but moreso than other peoples'. Their problem was the unboundedness, the uncontainedness, of their loving, = "idolatry." Nature takes care of the uprush of lust: history must impose the structure of "truth" to convert lust into biblical "love"--which is possible only by (a) revelation and (b) remembrance [thus, liturgy-life, "in remembrance of Me"]. For this profound reason, even the smallest act of unfaithfulness, by commission or omission, throws nature-history-community-personality into crisis: the function of the "fear" of God is to sensitize community and individual to this truth--and so fear and trust "shaded into one another" [Kittel.3.183]....From another biblical angle, the same integrity: ahav-(agape) is the desire to give oneself to a person, to possess a thing, and to perform a pleasure-bringing act--all three legitimate, only the first fully fulfilling of our humanity (and therefore requiring the "spiritual" elements of commitment and thought-action loyalty).

On the diagram,



position #1 maintains the balance expositied in the first paragraph of this thinksheet. Primary commitment is to "Spirit," i.e. Holy Spirit, and is lived out in and through a secondary commitment, viz. to "institution" [in the broadest sense, comprehensive of all relationships--intimate, intermediate, ultimate].

A faithful Christian must speak for truth as she/he sees it, and this will often include the painful speaking of truth-as-understood to power-experienced-as-over-person. [My personal way of managing this is chiefly by memos and thinksheets--without the production of which I'd slip into posture #2 or posture #3, both inauthentic of humanity and disloyal to the biblical vision and therefore to the biblical God.] A faithful Christian must also not be tardy, absent, delinquent in agreements within covenant-contract: institutional loyalty is as "spiritual," in biblical perspective, as is prayer.

Position #2 is the bureaucratic slave whose soul is sold, Watergatelike, to "the team" or "company" or "church" or however else the successful oppressor is named.

Position #3 is anybody whose primary loyalty is neither to God nor to institution but to self: "do one's thing" and "to thine own self be true." Luciferism, one might call it: the primal sin, easily committed by pseudo-"spiritual" types.