The Mechanics of Faith

Give ear O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old. (Psalm 78:1-2, ESV)

Is the golf swing about mechanics or feel? The answer can be either—or both.

Faith offers an interesting parallel. Does faith rest on objective facts or subjective experience? Again, both.

After the Scientific Revolution, Christianity increasingly defended the faith through reason, evidence, and historical fact.

By the nineteenth century, scholars were dissecting Scripture—studying ancient languages, analyzing manuscripts, and identifying supposed discrepancies.

There was value in much of this work. But there was also danger.

It's a little like dissecting a frog. You may learn a great deal about its anatomy, but somewhere in the process you've lost the most remarkable thing about it: the frog was alive.

We can do something similar to Scripture. We can examine historical claims, debate translations, study manuscripts, and defend the text's reliability—and all those issues matter. But we can become so focused on the individual trees that we miss the forest.

Some suggest the Enlightenment's influence is beginning to wane, and the cultural pendulum is swinging toward an older way of reading Scripture—one that makes room for mystery, symbol, intuition, and Spirit without abandoning reason.

Perhaps we're learning to swing the club again by feel, not just mechanics.

So, what might that look like?

I think it begins with two simple practices: attention and focus.

We can approach Scripture like an autopsy—dissecting and analyzing every part—and/or receive it more like poetry, allowing its stories, symbols, patterns, and images to work on us.

That does not mean abandoning the facts. Jesus was baptized by John and literally rose bodily from the dead. Those historical claims matter. But when we move beyond the fact of the Resurrection and

contemplate its larger meaning, something else begins to happen. We discover patterns woven throughout Scripture that seem to point beyond themselves toward later historical realities.

The frog comes alive again. The golf swing finds its feel.

Consider the biblical imagery surrounding baptism and new life.

Creation emerges from water and Spirit. Israel passes through the Red Sea and emerges from slavery into freedom. The nation crosses the Jordan into its inheritance. Naaman enters the Jordan and emerges cleansed.

God promises, “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean.” John baptizes in the Jordan in preparation for God’s coming kingdom. Jesus tells Nicodemus he must be born of water and Spirit.

The pattern keeps appearing:

Water. Spirit. Cleansing. Crossing. Freedom. Birth. Life.

The rational mind looks at all of this and asks, “Can you prove it?”

That’s a fair question. But faith does not end there. The heart responds with wonder: What is God showing us? What unseen reality does this pattern reveal? What might all of this be pointing toward?

Perhaps that is where attention and focus become so important.

The facts anchor our faith; patterns awaken it.

Symbols capture our imagination. Patterns stir wonder. Mystery invites us deeper. And suddenly the swing becomes less mechanical. We begin to feel it.

Faith begins to live.

So, when you study Scripture, pay attention. Slow down. Look for patterns, images, poetry, and echoes from one story to another. Let the beauty of the biblical narrative leave you in awe of what God has done—and what He is still doing.

Then, when you walk out the front door, do the same.

Pay attention.

Look for patterns, unexpected connections, moments of beauty, and those strange coincidences woven through an ordinary day. See the world not merely as a collection of facts and events, but as a creation alive with meaning.

Perhaps the reception of revelation begins by learning to see.

And as we learn to see, faith moves from something we merely believe in something we begin to experience.

The mechanics remain. The facts still matter.

But now we can feel the swing.

Prayer: Open our eyes to see the connectivity of all the stories found in Scripture.

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Boo Arnold
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