

**O**ur recent European trip took us to Nuremberg, Germany, and to the stadium where Hitler held many of his brainwashing rallies. Outside the stadium is a broad, paved avenue where Nazi tanks, troops and artillery paraded past cheering throngs.

Inside the stadium, thousands upon thousands of German soldiers would stand in razor-straight rows facing the imposing grandstand where the officials of the Third Reich were seated. The impressive military display, the rabble-rousing speeches and the klieg lights arching across the night sky stoked the emotions of the German people to a white-hot intensity. All waited breathlessly for the Führer.

Standing in that stadium fifty-five years later, it was difficult to imagine the irrational emotionalism which wreaked such havoc throughout the world. But then I thought of the recent gas attacks in Japan, the bombing in Oklahoma City and the Waco inferno. These reflect, in smaller scale, the same principle at work.

Mix unhappy people with a dose of belligerent “victimhood,” isolate them from the real world, give them a charismatic leader who stirs the embers of vindictiveness and superiority, and what do you get? A cult which has no qualms about poisoning, shooting or blowing up others.

While emotions are legitimate elements of our human make-up (see Jesus’ anger – Mk 3:5, sorrow – Jn 11:33, 35, and compassion – Mt 9:35-36), emotions are not designed as the basis for our actions. Emotions are unstable; they can change without warning. Emotions are mysterious; we often feel things we cannot explain. Emotions are misleading; they may take us in a direction the opposite of which we should go.

Christians must be guided by reason, reason that has been trained by the mind of God, Himself, as revealed in the Scriptures. Our god is not Reason, but God expects us to use the reasoning ability that He has given to us to act properly.

Our emotions may tell us not to punish a child, but our reason knows it fosters learning. Our emotions may tell us not to forgive, but our reason knows it is commanded. Our emotions may attract us to the wrong person, but our reason waves a warning flag. Emotions may tell us we have seen a miracle, but our reasoned understanding of God’s word knows better. Emotions must be subordinate to clear statements of truth from God’s word.