



True Repentance

True repentance requires a change of opinion respecting the nature of sin. This change of opinion is followed by a corresponding change of feeling toward sin, for feeling is the result of thought. When this change of opinion produces a corresponding change of feeling, if the opinion is right and the feeling corresponds, this is true repentance. Of course, the new opinion must be the right one; that is, the repentant's opinion regarding sin must be the same as God's. Godly sorrow, such as God requires, springs from such views of sin as God holds.

To one who truly repents, sin looks like a very different thing from what it did before repentance. Instead of being desirable or fascinating, sin now looks the very opposite: most odious and detestable. A truly repentant sinner will be astonished that he could ever have desired sin.

Unrepentant sinners may look at sin and see that it will ruin them, knowing God will punish them for it, but the sin itself appears desirable to them. If their sin could end in happiness, they never would think of abandoning it. But it is different for the repentant sinner, who sees his former conduct as perfectly shameful. He looks back upon it, exclaiming, "How hateful, how detestable, how worthy of hell, such and such a thing was in me."

True repentance involves a change of opinion with regard to the character of sin and its relation to God. Sinners do not see why God threatens sin with such terrible punishment. They love it so much themselves that they cannot see why God should find it worthy of everlasting punishment. At the time conviction is strongly upon them, they see it differently. In that moment, they see it in the same light that a Christian does. But the difference is this: the unrepentant only want a corresponding change of feeling to become Christians. They now agree that sin's relation to God is such that it deserves eternal death, but they do not change their actions as a result. This is the case with the devils and wicked spirits in hell.

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Mark this! A change of opinion respecting sin is indispensable to true repentance and it always precedes it. The heart never goes out to God in true repentance without a previous change of opinion concerning the nature of sin. There may be a change of opinion without repentance, but no genuine repentance without a change of opinion.

True repentance demands a change of opinion regarding the infectious nature or tendency of sin. Before the sinner repents, he thinks it utterly incredible that sin should have such tendencies as to deserve everlasting death. He may be fully changed, of course, as to his opinions on this point without repentance; but it is impossible for a person to truly repent without seeing sin as ruinous to himself and everybody else, for time and eternity. He must recognize that sin is at variance with all that is lovely and happy in the universe. He must see that sin by its very nature is injurious to himself and everybody else, and that there is no remedy for it except universal abstinence from it. The devil knows it to be so. Possibly, you are an unrepentant sinner and know this to be so as well.

True repentance involves a change of opinion with regard to the penalty of sin. The word *repentance* implies a change in the sinner's state of mind. The person who sins carelessly is almost devoid of right ideas, as far as this life is concerned, with regard to the penalty of sin. Even if he admits, in theory, that sin deserves eternal death, he does not really believe it. For if he believed it, it would be impossible for him to remain a careless sinner because we always live what we believe.

He is deceived, if he supposes that he honestly holds the opinion that sin deserves the wrath of God forever. But the truly awakened and convicted sinner has no more doubt of this than he has of the existence of God. He sees clearly that sin deserves everlasting punishment from God.

Charles Finney, *Lectures to Professing Christians*, (1891) pp. 156–157.

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A Note From the Editor

With this issue, *The Voice of Elijah*® has put the “wrap” on five years of *The Voice of Elijah*® newsletter. The last issue in our annual cycle is always the July issue, since the premier issue appeared in October of 1990. Consequently, this, our 20th issue, brings five years to a close.

As we began looking forward to the start of our sixth year in October, The Elijah Project suggested that we put part, or all, of the past five years of newsletter articles into a single book form. That would be a convenient way for future (and present) subscribers to obtain back issues in a consolidated form. It would also be the best format for incorporating a topical index to provide readers with immediate reference to all the various topics and concepts presented in these pages over the past several years. We plan to accomplish this down the road, but for now it remains just one of many “ideal goals” yet to be realized. The time, help, and money necessary to do many of the things we would like to do is not always available. So when I speak of what we hope to see accomplished in the future, don’t look at it as a promise. Look at it as an “ideal goal” we hope to achieve when God allows.

Speaking of time and help, I would personally like to thank all the men and women who have given so much of their time over the past five years to see that *The Voice of Elijah*® newsletters (not to mention *The Updates* and The Next Step tapes) have gotten produced and mailed out to those of us who desire to know the Truth. Should you be unaware, *The Voice of Elijah*® has no paid staff or employees. Although there are certain services which, of necessity, must be contracted out, there has not been one penny paid to those who give freely of their time to help this ministry. They all work full-time at other jobs and volunteer their labor to *The Voice of Elijah*® because they believe in this ministry.

If the truth be known, however, it would be beneficial to everyone if we could hire one or two salaried employees to handle much of the work now done by part-time volunteers. Our present inability to accomplish some of the “ideal goals” I mentioned above is due, in part, to a lack of personnel. It is becoming increasingly obvious to all of us that, as our ministry continues to grow over the next few years, it will eventually become too great a burden on volunteers to handle all that needs to be done. Hiring one or two full-time workers is an “ideal goal” we need to meet if we are to ultimately accomplish all the other “ideal goals.” However, since the monthly income necessary to employ even one full-time worker is simply not available, we must all wait and be patient. In the meantime, our thanks go out to those tireless individuals who labor behind the scenes each month without pay or recognition so that the

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rest of us can have the opportunity to hear the Truth.

Those of us here at *The Voice of Elijah*® are happy to report that more and more True Believers have been willing to step forward and give of their time to help. In fact, I now happen to be one of those individuals myself. Back in May I was asked if I would assume a greater level of responsibility within *The Voice of Elijah*® by taking over as President and Executive Editor, replacing Ken Brooks. I said I would. The effect of this will be greater involvement on my part, while providing Ken greater freedom to deal with other concerns related to our ministry. While Ken may be stepping down in one capacity, he will still remain active on the Board of Directors to help chart a steady course for our ministry. Ken has done an admirable job over the past year in carrying out his many responsibilities, and we owe him our thanks for a job well done. I hope to do as well during the time I hold this position.

It may surprise you to learn that many of those who are actively involved in the ministry of *The Voice of Elijah*® do not actually reside in, or even anywhere near, *The Voice of Elijah*® headquarters in the Dallas metropolitan area. With modern technology being what it is today, it is possible for many (dare I say "The Many") to have a hand in helping *The Voice of Elijah*® without ever meeting the others. Some of the people involved in this ministry are presently scattered about in such places as Alabama, Kansas, and Minnesota. They all have full-time jobs just like I do, and they live their lives as they feel is pleasing to God. (I mention this last just to tweak those avid cult watchers who would love to believe *The Voice of Elijah*® is published by a bunch of brainwashed groupies who are totally cut off from society, living together in an isolated compound somewhere near Dallas where they pay homage to their "cult leader.")

Sarcasm aside, the point I'm making is this: You don't have to live in the Dallas area to be of service to our ministry. Certainly, the financial support provided by Monthly Contributors and The Next Step participants is the most immediate and practical way for most to help. So if you believe in the work *The Voice of Elijah*® is doing and would really like to help, why not start by becoming a Monthly Contributor? For a continuing gift of \$25 a month, you can provide ongoing support for our ministry, plus you will personally benefit by receiving the following:

1. A complimentary subscription to *The Voice of Elijah*® newsletter (4 issues per year) and to *The Voice of Elijah*® Update (8 issues per year) during the entire time you remain a Monthly Contributor. This provides you one publication a month filled with the Truth. At present, the articles appearing in *The Update* deal extensively with the writings of Early Church authors prior to the Church's loss of *The Teaching* around A.D. 200. If you sometimes wonder whether Larry Harper's teaching has any basis in fact, you need to be reading *The Update*. It shows his teaching agrees completely with what the Early Church believed and understood.

2. Your own personal copy of *The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist*. This book was published by The Elijah Project in 1992, and it is available only to Monthly Contributors of *The Voice of Elijah*®. It should not be confused with its condensed version titled *The AntiChrist*, which is available on the Order Form in this newsletter. *The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist* (which is not available to anyone but Monthly Contributors) examines in greater detail than *The AntiChrist* what the Early Church understood about the coming Antichrist and the End Times. You'll be surprised at the knowledge the Early Church had concerning the period of history the Church must yet endure in these Last Days.

3. In addition to these benefits, you will also receive other books and offerings from The Elijah Project as they become available during the time you remain a Monthly Contributor.

All in all, the knowledge and understanding you will gain from these publications is well worth the contribution of \$25 monthly. But beyond this, you will be contributing to this ministry as we strive to reach more and more born-again Believers with the Truth. Of course, if you don't actually believe *The Voice of Elijah*® teaches the Truth of the Gospel, then I would encourage you not to support us. You should instead contribute to whatever ministry you feel is doing God's work. If you do believe the things you have heard through this ministry, however, I'm requesting your greater involvement.

For those of you who don't know what to think of *The Voice of Elijah*®, but would like to learn more about our beliefs without obligating yourself as a Monthly Contributor, I suggest you order *The Way, The Truth, The Life* seminar tapes. This set of audiotapes was recorded from a seminar sponsored by *The Voice of Elijah*® in October 1993. The purpose of the seminar was to present an overview of what we believe to be true, so that those who are searching for Truth in these Last Days would have an opportunity to find it.

These tapes are undoubtedly the single greatest source presently available from *The Voice of Elijah*® providing comprehensive information concerning our beliefs. If you are willing to listen to these eight cassette tapes with an open and receptive mind, you will undoubtedly gain a greater perspective of the "big picture" as we believe it to be.

The Way, The Truth, The Life consists of eight audio cassette tapes conveniently packaged in an album, accompanied by a 131-page illustrated syllabus. These tapes have much to teach you if:

1. you have been struggling to understand the link between the messages of the Old and the New Testament, or

2. you are not aware of the absolute importance God has attached to His Word (The Teaching) throughout the long history of Israel, or

3. you have no idea that Satan has continually undermined the Church's understanding of God's Word through lies taught by false teachers, or

4. you think that taking a "leap of faith" is a valid biblical concept whereby you simply believe something without good reason.

Because we recognize the importance of this information to your overall understanding of The Teaching, *The Voice of Elijah*® is pleased to offer this set of teaching tapes for \$30 during this quarter only. This is a 25 percent reduction in the requested donation, so if it has ever crossed your mind to take this step, now is the time to do so. Or, if you have ever thought of giving these tapes as a gift, now is the perfect opportunity. But remember, this special offer is good only for orders postmarked before October 1, 1995. So don't put this off, send your order as soon as possible.

As always, we welcome your letters and comments about how you have benefited from *The Voice of Elijah*®, how we can improve any of our materials, or ways in which you would like to help us reach those who have not yet received this information. We look forward to hearing from you. ■

Allen Fries

Familiarity Breeds Contempt, but Ignorance Propagates Faster Than Rabbits

The following article contains a portion of Jonathan Edward's Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God (first published in 1741). I have bolded selected portions of the text for the purpose of emphasis. I have also included my own comments before and after the text.

We all "know" certain things just because they are part of that vast body of belief called "common knowledge." Now wouldn't it be funny if what is "common knowledge" to our generation turns out to be downright stupid when the Truth finally comes to light? No, sadly enough, it wouldn't be funny. It would just be normal. Every other generation has been shown to be superbly ignorant in one way or the other. So why should we think we are any different?

There are those fools among us, however, who are certain they have an inside track on this or that Truth. These idiots are convinced they know what they think they know just because they have an advanced degree of one kind or the other hanging on their wall (most likely in plain view for all to see how distinguished they are). I never could figure that one out. Can you? Is a degree one of those magical things you see in the Disney movies? You know, where the owner can approach the degree and say: "Degree, Degree, hanging on the wall. Who is the one who knows it all?" I wish I knew. I have a couple of those little suckers tucked away around here somewhere myself. If it worked that way I'd pull 'em out in a minute and tack 'em up for all to see.

Have you ever considered the fact that the "advancement of civilization" is based on a search for the Truth related to all facets of reality? That's where

the "pride of accomplishment" shades off into arrogance on the part of imbeciles who get paid extraordinarily well only because they "know" something about which the average person knows next to nothing at all. That's when their arrogance leads them to the conclusion they have somehow become an "expert" with all the answers.

Unfortunately, even the "experts" sometimes give the Truth short shrift in favor of what sounds good. More and more often nowadays the "expert" on one subject or the other resorts to sensationalism in an effort to get the ear of the media. (Speaking of the media ... Now there's a circus if there ever was one. Too bad they hired too many clowns. When those who are supposed to be the "experts" on the events of the day resort to hype in order to gain greater market share, you can kiss the Truth goodbye forever and rest assured that Satan is going to use their goofiness to achieve his own ends.)

I was reading the other day where most all the prestigious organizations publish guidebooks listing the recognized "experts" in various fields of endeavor. That would seem to be commendable. After all, how would we ever know someone was an "expert" if there wasn't some objective third party to tell us? That's why the powers that be maintain their own official list of "experts." Their lists normally run about 350 pages. But then there is *The 1995 Yearbook of Experts, Authorities & Spokespersons*. It runs two to three times that many pages and is sent free to guess who? The folks in the media, of course. Would you like to know how to get yourself included in this distinguished list of "know-it-alls"? All it takes is \$375 for a one-sixth page "reference listing." You can have a

full-page of self-promotion for only \$1250. So little for so much. So much for so little. So much for the “experts” you see on television.

Jesus said this about self-promotion:

“If I {alone} bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true.”

(John 5:31)

It’s fairly obvious that verse applies to those who purchase ads in a publication that blatantly touts self-proclaimed “experts.” But what about all those “experts”—self-proclaimed or otherwise—out there laboring in the field of religion? Jesus said something that pertains specifically to them as well:

“Woe {to you} when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.”

(Luke 6:26)

That verse applies to a whole lot of “know-it-alls” in the Church today who claim to speak for God yet don’t even know Him. The searing heat of His wrath is beating down on them, yet they go on confidently proclaiming the certainty of God’s unwavering approval of anyone who attends church on Sunday, claims to be a Christian, etc. That leaves me wondering how they know what they pretend to know so well. Some of them prominently display their academic credentials (honorary or otherwise), thinking, I suppose, that education alone provides sufficient proof of one’s competence in religion.

Speaking of education and experts who lack competence ... Few people are willing to admit it, but *oral tradition* provides the foundation on which the Church sits today just as it did in the days of the Apostles. That’s why thousands of Protestant “Christians” graduate from “Christian” schools each year, each one having been indoctrinated to one degree or another into the *oral tradition* they *received* while sitting in religion classes. Some of them undoubtedly believe the *oral tradition* they *received* from some anonymous “expert” in the field is the same Gospel message of salvation by faith that was preached by the Christian giants of past generations—men like Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Finney.

In truth, the message most “Christian” students hear in class today has little in common with what these men and their generation believed. Over the past two centuries, Satan has managed to thoroughly distort the *meaning* of key concepts like “faith” and “fear.” (See “Oh, So Many Four-Letter Words!” and “On Fairy Tales and Holy Hell,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1992; and “Satan’s Fools Are Satan’s Tools,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1994.) Few, if any, of those graduating from “Christian” schools today are aware of that sad fact.

The Truth is, nearly everybody considers themselves to be an “expert” in the field of religion. That is, we all have an innate tendency to believe we know all that we need to know about God. Yet, contrary to what we want to think, our beliefs are a hodgepodge of contradictory notions that are based on a host of mangled translations and mistaken assumptions concerning the message of the Hebrew Scriptures that are, in most cases, founded on hearsay evidence. I’m merely telling you most “Christians” are intellectual packrats. They believe a lot of contradictory nonsense.

Meanwhile, the recognized “experts” in evangelical Christianity today have, for the most part, gone the way of all the “experts” in the world, self-proclaimed or otherwise. Media hype and on-the-spot fabrication have replaced common sense and an absolute concern for the Truth. That’s why I have been providing you evidence concerning what earlier generations of Christians believed. I intend to show Satan’s lie for what it is: Not only does this generation of evangelical Christians know next to nothing about what the Apostolic Church believed, their beliefs have little in common with what earlier generations of evangelical Protestant Christians believed.

In case you aren’t aware of how far this generation is from what evangelical Christianity used to be, I commend to you a work written by the late Jonathan Edwards. You may, from time to time, hear him mentioned as one of the Evangelical “experts” who lived in a bygone era. I hesitate to credit him with that title, but only because there have not been any “experts” on the Apostolic message since the early second century when the Church began losing *The Apostolic Teaching*. Nonetheless, I do believe that Edwards, like John Wesley and Charles Finney, had plenty of experience in dealing with people who had been born again. In that regard, you might look at him as an

“expert” on the new birth. He certainly knew a lot more about it than most “evangelists” working in the Church today.

The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the True Spirit

I John iv. 1

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

In the apostolic age, there was the greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God that ever was; both as to his extraordinary influences and gifts, and his ordinary operations, in convincing, converting, enlightening, and sanctifying the souls of men. But as the influences of the true Spirit abounded, so counterfeits did also abound: **the devil was abundant in mimicking, both the ordinary and extraordinary influences of the Spirit of God, as is manifest by innumerable passages of the apostles’ writings.** This made it very necessary that the church of Christ should be furnished with some certain rules, distinguishing and clear marks, by which she might proceed safely in judging of the true from the false without danger of being imposed upon.

The giving of such rules is the plain design of this chapter, where we have this matter more expressly and fully treated of than anywhere else in the Bible. The apostle, of set purpose, undertakes to supply the church of God with such marks of the true Spirit as may be plain and safe, and well accommodated to use and practice; and that the subject might be clearly and sufficiently handled, he insists upon it throughout the chapter, which makes it wonderful that what is here said is no more taken notice of in this extraordinary day, when there is such an uncommon and extensive operation on the minds of people, such a variety of opinions concerning it, and so much talk about the work of the Spirit.

The apostle’s discourse on this subject is introduced by an occasional mention of the indwelling of the Spirit, as the sure evidence of an interest in Christ; “And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” Whence we may infer, that the design of the apostle is not only to give marks whereby to distinguish the

true Spirit from the false, in his extraordinary gifts of prophecy and miracles, but also in his ordinary influences on the minds of his people, in order to their union to Christ, and being built up in him, which is also manifest from the marks themselves that are given, which we shall hereafter notice.

The words of the text are an introduction to this discourse of the distinguishing signs of the true and false Spirit.—Before the apostle proceeds to lay down the signs, he exhorteth Christians, first, against an overcredulousness, and a forwardness to admit every specious appearance as the work of a true Spirit: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God.” And, second, he shows, that there were many counterfeits, “because many false prophets were gone out into the world.” **These did not only pretend to have the Spirit of God in his extraordinary gifts of inspiration, but also to be the great friends and favourites of heaven, to be eminently holy persons, and to have much of the ordinary saving, sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God on their hearts. Hence we are to look upon these words as a direction to examine and try their pretences to the Spirit of God, in both these respects.**

My design therefore at this time is to show what are the true, certain, and distinguishing evidences of a work of the Spirit of God, by which we may safely proceed in judging of any operation we find in ourselves, or see in others. And here I would observe, that we are to take the Scriptures as our guide in such cases. This is the great and standing rule which God has given to his church, in order to guide them in things relating to the great concerns of their souls; and it is an infallible and sufficient rule.

There are undoubtedly sufficient marks given to guide the church of God in this great affair of judging of spirits, without which it would lie open to woeful delusion, and would be remedilessly exposed to be imposed on and devoured by its enemies. And we need not be afraid to trust these rules. Doubtless that Spirit who indited the Scriptures knew how to give us good rules, by which to distinguish his operations from all that is falsely pretended to be from him. And this, as I observed before, the Spirit of God has here done of set purpose, and done it more particularly and fully than anywhere else: so that in my present discourse I shall go nowhere else for rules or marks for the trial of spirits, but shall confine myself to those

that I find in this chapter.—But before I proceed particularly to speak to these, I would prepare my way by, **FIRST**, observing negatively, in some instances, what are not signs or evidences of a work of the Spirit of God.

Section I

Negative Signs; or, What are no signs by which we are to judge of a work—and especially, What are no evidences that a work is not from the Spirit of God.

I. Nothing can be certainly concluded from this, That a work is carried on in a way very unusual and extraordinary; provided the variety or difference be such, as may still be comprehended within the limits of Scripture rules. **What the church has been used to, is not a rule by which we are to judge; because there may be new and extraordinary works of God, and he has heretofore evidently wrought in an extraordinary manner. He has brought to pass new things, strange works; and has wrought in such a manner as to surprise both men and angels. And as God has done thus in times past, so we have no reason to think but that he will do so still. The prophecies of Scripture give us reason to think that God has things to accomplish, which have never yet been seen.**

No deviation from what has hitherto been usual, let it be never so great, is an argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, if it be no deviation from his prescribed rule. The Holy Spirit is sovereign in his operation; and we know that he uses a great variety; and we cannot tell how great a variety he may use, within the compass of the rules he himself has fixed. We ought not to limit God where he has not limited himself.

Therefore it is not reasonable to determine that a work is not from God's Holy Spirit because of the extraordinary degree in which the minds of persons are influenced. If they seem to have an extraordinary conviction of the dreadful nature of sin, and a very uncommon sense of the misery of a Christless condition—or extraordinary views of the certainty and glory of divine things,—and are proportionably moved with very extraordinary affections of fear and sorrow, desire, love, or joy: or if the apparent change be very sudden, and the work be carried on with very unusual swiftness—and the persons affected are very

numerous, and many of them are very young, with other unusual circumstances, not infringing upon Scripture marks of a work of the Spirit—these things are no argument that the work is not of the Spirit of God.—The extraordinary and unusual degree of influence, and power of operation, if in its nature it be agreeable to the rules and marks given in Scripture, is rather an argument in its favour; for by how much higher the degree which in its nature is agreeable to the rule, so much the more is there of conformity to the rule: and so much the more evident that conformity. When things are in small degrees, though they be really agreeable to the rule, it is not so easily seen whether their nature agrees with the rule.

There is a great aptness in persons to doubt of things that are strange; especially elderly persons, to think that to be right which they have never been used to in their day, and have not heard of in the days of their fathers. But if it be a good argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God, that it is very unusual, then it was so in the apostles' days. The work of the Spirit then, was carried on in a manner that, in very many respects, was altogether new; such as never had been seen or heard since the world stood. The work was then carried on with more visible and remarkable power than ever; nor had there been seen before such mighty and wonderful effects of the Spirit of God in sudden changes, and such great engagedness and zeal in great multitudes—such a sudden alteration in towns, cities, and countries; such a swift progress, and vast extent of the work—and many other extraordinary circumstances might be mentioned. The great unusualness of the work surprised the Jews; they knew not what to make of it, but could not believe it to be the work of God: many looked upon the persons that were the subjects of it as bereft of reason: as you may see in Acts ii. 13, xxvi. 24, and I Cor. iv. 10.

And we have reason from Scripture prophecy to suppose, that at the commencement of that last and greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God, that is to be in the latter ages of the world, the manner of the work will be very extraordinary, and such as never has yet been seen; so that there shall be occasion then to say, as in Isa. lxvi. 8, “Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed,

she brought forth her children." It may be reasonably expected that the extraordinary manner of the work then will bear some proportion to the very extraordinary events, and that glorious change in the state of the world, which God will bring to pass by it.

II. A work is not to be judged of by any effects on the bodies of men; such as tears, trembling, groans, loud outcries, agonies of body, or the failing of bodily strength. The influence persons are under is not to be judged of one way or other by such effects on the body; and the reason is because the Scripture nowhere gives us any such rule. We cannot conclude that persons are under the influence of the true Spirit because we see such effects upon their bodies, because this is not given as a mark of the true Spirit; nor on the other hand, have we any reason to conclude, from any such outward appearances, that persons are not under the influence of the Spirit of God, because there is no rule of Scripture given us to judge of spirits by, that does either expressly or indirectly exclude such effects on the body, nor does reason exclude them.

It is easily accounted for from the consideration of the nature of divine and eternal things, and the nature of man, and the laws of the union between soul and body, how a right influence, a true and proper sense of things, should have such effects on the body, even those that are of the most extraordinary kind, such as taking away the bodily strength, or throwing the body into great agonies, and extorting loud outcries. There are none of us but do suppose, and would have been ready at any time to say it, that the misery of hell is doubtless so dreadful, and eternity so vast, that if a person should have a clear apprehension of that misery as it is, it would be more than his feeble frame could bear, and especially if at the same time he saw himself in great danger of it, and to be utterly uncertain whether he should be delivered from it, yea, and to have no security from it one day or hour.

If we consider human nature, we must not wonder, that when persons have a great sense of that which is so amazingly dreadful, and also have a great view of their own wickedness and God's anger, that things seem to them to forebode speedy and immediate destruction. We see the nature of man to be such that when he is in danger of some terrible calamity to

which he is greatly exposed, he is ready upon every occasion to think, that *now* it is coming.—When persons' hearts are full of fear, in time of war, they are ready to tremble at the shaking of a leaf, and to expect the enemy every minute, and to say within themselves, now I shall be slain.

If we should suppose that a person saw himself hanging over a great pit, full of fierce and glowing flames, by a thread that he knew to be very weak, and not sufficient to bear his weight, and knew that multitudes had been in such circumstances before, and that most of them had fallen and perished, and saw nothing within reach, that he could take hold of to save him, what distress would he be in! How ready to think that *now* the thread was breaking, that now, *this minute*, he should be swallowed up in those dreadful flames! And would not he be ready to cry out in such circumstances? How much more those that see themselves in this manner hanging over an infinitely more dreadful pit, or held over it in the hand of God, who at the same time they see to be exceedingly provoked! **No wonder that the wrath of God, when manifested but a little to the soul, overbears human strength.**

So it may easily be accounted for, that a true sense of the glorious excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his wonderful dying love, and the exercise of a truly spiritual love and joy, should be such as very much to overcome the bodily strength. We are all ready to own, that no man can see God and live, and that it is but a very small part of that apprehension of the glory and love of Christ which the saints enjoy in heaven, that our present frame can bear; therefore it is not at all strange that God should sometimes give his saints such foretastes of heaven, as to diminish their bodily strength.

If it was not unaccountable that the queen of Sheba fainted, and had her bodily strength taken away, when she came to see the glory of Solomon, much less is it unaccountable that she who is the antitype of the queen of Sheba, viz., the Church, that is brought, as it were, from the utmost ends of the earth, from being an alien and stranger, far off, in a state of sin and misery, should faint when she comes to see the glory of Christ, who is the antitype of Solomon; and especially will be so in that prosperous, peaceful, glorious kingdom which he will set up in the world in its latter age.

Some object against such extraordinary appearances that we have no instances of them recorded in the New Testament, under the extraordinary effusions of the Spirit. Were this allowed, I can see no force in the objection, if neither reason nor any rule of Scripture exclude such things; especially considering what was observed under the foregoing particular. I do not know that we have any express mention in the New Testament of any person's weeping, or groaning, or sighing through fear of hell, or a sense of God's anger; but is there any body so foolish as from hence to argue that in whomsoever these things appear, their convictions are not from the Spirit of God? And the reason why we do not argue thus is because these are easily accounted for, from what we know of the nature of man, and from what the Scripture informs us in general concerning the nature of eternal things, and the nature of the convictions of God's Spirit; so that there is no need that any thing should be said in particular concerning these external, circumstantial effects.

Nobody supposes that there is any need of express scripture for every external, accidental manifestation of the inward motion of the mind: and though such circumstances are not particularly recorded in sacred history, yet there is a great deal of reason to think from the general accounts we have that it could not be otherwise than that such things must be in those days. **And there is also reason to think that such great outpouring of the Spirit was not wholly without those more extraordinary effects on persons' bodies.** The jailer in particular, seems to have been an instance of that nature, when he, in the utmost distress and amazement, came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas. His falling down at that time does not seem to be a designed putting himself into a posture of supplication, or humble address to Paul and Silas; for he seems not to have said any thing to them then; but he first brought them out, and then he says to them, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? Acts xvi. 29, and 30. But his falling down seems to be from the same cause as his trembling. The Psalmist gives an account of his crying out aloud, and a great weakening of his body under convictions of conscience, and a sense of the guilt of sin, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4: "When I kept silence my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long; for day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into

the drought of summer."—We may at least argue so much from it, that such an effect of conviction of sin may well in some cases be supposed; for if we should suppose any thing of an *auxesis* in the expressions, yet the Psalmist would not represent his case by what would be absurd, and to which no degree of that exercise of mind he spoke of would have any tendency.—We read of the disciples, Matt. xiv. 26, that when they saw Christ coming to them in the storm, and took him for some terrible enemy, threatening their destruction in that storm, "they cried out for fear."

Why then should it be thought strange that persons should cry out for fear, when God appears to them, as a terrible enemy, and they see themselves in great danger of being swallowed up in the bottomless gulf of eternal misery? The spouse, once and again, speaks of herself as overpowered with the love of Christ, so as to weaken her body, and make her faint. Cant. ii. 5, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples; for I am sick of love." And chap. v. 8, "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love." From whence we may at least argue that such an effect may well be supposed to arise from such a cause in the saints, in some cases, and that such an effect will sometimes be seen in the church of Christ.

It is a weak objection, that the impressions of enthusiasts have a great effect on their bodies. That the Quakers used to tremble is no argument that Saul, afterwards Paul, and the jailer did not tremble from real convictions of conscience. Indeed all such objections from effects on the body, let them be greater or less, seem to be exceeding frivolous; they who argue thence, proceed in the dark, they know not what ground they go upon, nor by what rule they judge. The root and course of things is to be looked at, and the nature of the operations and affections are to be inquired into, and examined by the rule of God's word, and not the motions of the blood and animal spirits.

III. It is no argument that an operation on the minds of people is not the work of the Spirit of God that it occasions a great deal of noise about religion. For though true religion be of a contrary nature to that of the Pharisees—which was ostentatious, and delighted to set itself forth to the view of men for their applause—yet such is human nature, that it is

morally impossible there should be a great concern, strong affection, and a general engagedness of mind amongst a people without causing a notable, visible, and open commotion and alteration amongst that people.—Surely, it is no argument that the minds of persons are not under the influence of God’s Spirit, that they are very much moved: for indeed spiritual and eternal things are so great, and of such infinite concern that there is a great absurdity in men’s being but moderately moved and affected by them; and surely it is no argument that they are not moved by the Spirit of God, that they are affected with these things in some measure as they deserve, or in some proportion to their importance. And when was there ever any such thing since the world stood, as a people in general being greatly affected in any affair whatsoever, without noise or stir? The nature of man will not allow it.

Indeed Christ says, Luke xvii. 20, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.” That is, it will not consist in what is outward and visible; it shall not be like earthly kingdoms set up with outward pomp, in some particular place, which shall be especially the royal city, and seat of the kingdom; as Christ explains himself in the words next following, “Neither shall they say, Lo here, or lo there; for behold the kingdom of God is within you.” Not that the kingdom of God shall be set up in the world, on the ruin of Satan’s kingdom, without a very observable, great effect: a mighty change in the state of things, to the observation and astonishment of the whole world: for such an effect as this is even held forth in the prophecies of Scripture, and is so by Christ himself, in this very place, and even in his own explanation of these fore-mentioned words, ver. 24: “For as the lightning that lighteneth out of one part under heaven shineth unto another part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day.”

This is to distinguish Christ’s coming to set up his kingdom, from the coming of false Christs, which he tells us will be in a private manner in the deserts, and in the secret chambers; whereas this event of setting up the kingdom of God, should be open and public, in the sight of the whole world with clear manifestation, like lightning that cannot be hid, but glares in every one’s eyes, and shines from one side of heaven to the other. And we find that when Christ’s kingdom came, by that remarkable pouring out of the

Spirit in the apostles’ days, it occasioned a great stir everywhere. What a mighty opposition was there in Jerusalem, on occasion of that great effusion of the Spirit! And so in Samaria, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, and other places! The affair filled the world with noise, and gave occasion to some to say of the apostles, that they had turned the world upside down, Acts xvii. 6.

IV. It is no argument that an operation on the minds of a people is not the work of the Spirit of God that many who are the subjects of it have great impressions made on their imaginations. That persons have many impressions on their imaginations does not prove that they have nothing else. It is easy to be accounted for, that there should be much of this nature amongst a people, where a great multitude of all kinds of constitutions have their minds engaged with intense thought and strong affections about invisible things; yea, it would be strange if there should not. Such is our nature that we cannot think of things invisible without a degree of imagination.

I dare appeal to any man, of the greatest powers of mind, whether he is able to fix his thoughts on God, or Christ, or the things of another world, without imaginary ideas attending his meditations? And the more engaged the mind is, and the more intense the contemplation and affection, still the more lively and strong the imaginary idea will ordinarily be; especially when attended with surprise. And this is the case when the mental prospect is very new, and takes strong hold of the passions, as fear or joy; and when the change of the state and views of the mind is sudden, from a contrary extreme, as from that which was extremely dreadful, to that which is extremely ravishing and delightful. **And it is no wonder that many persons do not well distinguish between that which is imaginary and that which is intellectual and spiritual; and that they are apt to lay too much weight on the imaginary part, and are most ready to speak of that in the account they give of their experiences, especially persons of less understanding and of distinguishing capacity.**

As God has given us such a faculty as the imagination, and so made us that we cannot think of things spiritual and invisible, without some exercise of this faculty; so, it appears to me, that such is our state and nature, that this faculty is really subservient and helpful

to the other faculties of the mind, when a proper use is made of it: though oftentimes, when the imagination is too strong and the other faculties weak, it overbears, and disturbs them in their exercise.

It appears to me manifest, in many instances with which I have been acquainted, that God has really made use of this faculty to truly divine purposes; especially in some that are more ignorant. God seems to condescend to their circumstances, and deal with them as babes; as of old he instructed his church, whilst in a state of ignorance and minority, by types and outward representations. I can see nothing unreasonable in such a position. Let others who have much occasion to deal with souls in spiritual concerns judge whether experience does not confirm it.

It is no argument that a work is not of the Spirit of God that some who are the subjects of it have been in a kind of ecstasy, wherein they have been carried beyond themselves, and have had their minds transported into a train of strong and pleasing imaginations, and a kind of visions, as though they were rapt up even to heaven and there saw glorious sights. I have been acquainted with some such instances, and I see no need of bringing in the help of the devil into the account that we give of these things, nor yet of supposing them to be of the same nature with the visions of the prophets, or St. Paul's rapture into paradise. **Human nature, under these exercises and affections, is all that need be brought into the account.**

If it may be well accounted for, that persons under a true sense of a glorious and wonderful greatness and excellency of divine things, and soul-ravishing views of the beauty and love of Christ, should have the strength of nature overpowered, as I have already shown that it may; then I think it is not at all strange that amongst great numbers that are thus affected and overborne, there should be some persons of particular constitutions that should have their imaginations thus affected. The effect is no other than what bears a proportion and analogy to other effects of the strong exercise of their minds.

It is no wonder, when the thoughts are so fixed, and the affections so strong—and the whole soul so engaged, ravished, and swallowed up—that all other parts of the body are so affected, as to be deprived of their strength, and the whole frame ready to dissolve. Is it any wonder that, in such a case, the brain in

particular (especially in some constitutions), which we know is most especially affected by intense contemplations and exercises of mind, should be so affected, that its strength and spirits should for a season be diverted and taken off from impressions made on the organs of external sense, and be wholly employed in a train of pleasing delightful imaginations, corresponding with the present frame of the mind? Some are ready to interpret such things wrong, and to lay too much weight on them, as prophetic visions, divine revelations, and sometimes significations from heaven of what shall come to pass; which the issue, in some instances I have known, has shown to be otherwise.

But yet, it appears to me that such things are evidently some times from the Spirit of God, though indirectly; that is, their extraordinary frame of mind, and that strong and lively sense of divine things which is the occasion of them, is from his Spirit; and also as the mind continues in its holy frame, and retains a divine sense of the excellency of spiritual things even in its rapture; which holy frame and sense is from the Spirit of God, though the imaginations that attend it are but accidental, and therefore there is commonly something or other in them that is confused, improper, and false.

V. It is no sign that a work is not from the Spirit of God that example is a great means of it. It is surely no argument that an effect is not from God that means are used in producing it; for we know that it is God's manner to make use of means in carrying on his work in the world, and it is no more an argument against the divinity of an effect, that this means is made use of, than if it was by any other means. **It is agreeable to Scripture that persons should be influenced by one another's good example.** The Scripture directs us to set good examples to that end. Matt. v. 16, 1 Pet. iii. 1, 1 Tim. iv. 12, Titus ii. 7; and also directs us to be influenced by the good examples of others, and to follow them, 2 Cor. viii. 1–7, Heb. vi. 12, Phil. iii. 17, 1 Cor. iv. 16, and chap. xi. 1, 2 Thess. iii. 9, 1 Thess. i. 7. By which it appears that example is one of God's means; and certainly it is no argument that a work is not of God that his own means are made use of to effect it.

And as it is a *Scriptural* way of carrying on God's work, by example, so it is a *reasonable* way. **It is no argument that men are not influenced by reason, that**

they are influenced by example. This way of persons holding forth truth to one another has a tendency to enlighten the mind, and to convince reason. None will deny but that for persons to signify things one to another by words may rationally be supposed to tend to enlighten each other's minds. But the same thing may be signified by actions, and signified much more fully and effectually. Words are of no use any other-wise than as they convey our own ideas to others; but actions, in some cases, may do it much more fully.

There is a language in actions; and in some cases, much more clear and convincing than in words. It is therefore no argument against the goodness of the effect, that persons are greatly affected by seeing others so; yea, though the impression be made only by seeing the tokens of great and extraordinary affection in others in their behaviour, taking for granted what they are affected with, without hearing them say one word. There may be language sufficient in such a case in their behaviour only, to convey their minds to others, and to signify to them their sense of things more than can possibly be done by words only. If a person should see another under extreme bodily torment, he might receive much clearer ideas, and more convincing evidence of what he suffered by his actions in his misery, than he could do only by the words of an unaffected indifferent relater. In like manner he might receive a greater idea of any thing that is excellent and very delightful from the behaviour of one that is in actual enjoyment, than by the dull narration of one which is inexperienced and insensible himself.

I desire that this matter may be examined by the strictest reason.—Is it not manifest that effects produced in persons' minds are rational, since not only weak and ignorant people are much influenced by example but also those that make the greatest boast of strength of reason are more influenced by reason held forth in this way than almost any other way. Indeed the religious affections of many when raised by this means, as by hearing the word preached, or any other means, may prove flashy, and soon vanish, as Christ represents the stony-ground hearers; but the affections of some thus moved by example are abiding, and prove to be of saving issue.

There never yet was a time of remarkable pouring out of the Spirit, and great revival of religion, but that example had a main hand. So it was at the

Reformation, and in the apostles' days, in Jerusalem and Samaria, and Ephesus, and other parts of the world, as will be most manifest to any one that attends to the accounts we have in the Acts of the Apostles. As in those days one person was moved by another, so one city or town was influenced by the example of another: 1 Thess. i. 7, 8, "so that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia, for from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad."

It is no valid objection against examples being so much used that the Scripture speaks of the word as the principal means of carrying on God's work; for the word of God is the principal means, nevertheless, by which other means operate and are made effectual. Even the sacraments have no effect but by the word; and so it is that example becomes effectual. Even the sacraments have no effect but by the word; and so it is that example becomes effectual. Even the sacraments have no effect but by the word; and so it is that example becomes effectual. Even the sacraments have no effect but by the word; and so it is that example becomes effectual. Even the sacraments have no effect but by the word; and so it is that example becomes effectual.

That example should be a great means of propagating the church of God seems to be several ways signified in Scripture: it is signified by Ruth's following Naomi out of the land of Moab, into the land of Israel, when she resolved that she would not leave her, but would go whither she went, and would lodge where she lodged; and that Naomi's people should be her people, and Naomi's God her God. Ruth, who was the ancestral mother of David, and of Christ, was undoubtedly a great type of the church; upon which account her history is inserted in the canon of Scripture. In her leaving the land of Moab and its gods, to come and put her trust under the shadow of the wings of the God of Israel, we have a type of the conversion not only of the Gentile church but of every sinner, that is naturally an alien and stranger, but in his conversion forgets his own people, and father's house, and becomes a fellow-citizen with the saints and a true Israelite.

The same seems to be signified in the effect the example of the spouse, when she was sick of love, has on the daughters of Jerusalem, i.e., visible Christians, who are first awakened, by seeing the spouse in such

extraordinary circumstances, and then converted. See Cant. v. 8, 9, and vi. 1. And this is undoubtedly one way that “the Spirit and the bride say, come,” Rev. xxii. 17; i.e., the Spirit in the bride. It is foretold, that the work of God should be very much carried on by this means, in the last great outpouring of the Spirit, that should introduce the glorious day of the church, so often spoken of in Scripture, Zech. viii. 21–23: “And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people, and strong nations, shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

VI. It is no sign that a work is not from the Spirit of God that many who seem to be the subjects of it are guilty of great imprudences and irregularities in their conduct. We are to consider that the end for which God pours out his Spirit is to make men holy, and not to make them politicians. It is no wonder that in a mixed multitude of all sorts—wise and unwise, young and old, of weak and strong natural abilities, under strong impressions of mind—there are many who behave themselves imprudently. There are but few that know how to conduct themselves under vehement affections of any kind, whether of a temporal or spiritual nature; to do so requires a great deal of discretion, strength, and steadiness of mind.

A thousand imprudences will not prove a work to be not of the Spirit of God; yea, if there be not only imprudences, but many things prevailing that are irregular, and really contrary to the rules of God’s holy word. That it should be thus may be well accounted for from the exceeding weakness of human nature, together with the remaining darkness and corruption of those that are yet the subjects of the saving influences of God’s Spirit, and have a real zeal for God.

We have a remarkable instance in the New Testament of a people that partook largely of that great effusion of the Spirit in the apostles’ days, among whom there nevertheless abounded imprudences and great irregularities; viz., the church at

Corinth. There is scarcely any church more celebrated in the New Testament for being blessed with large measures of the Spirit of God, both in his ordinary influences, in convincing and converting sinners, and also in his extraordinary and miraculous gifts; yet what manifold imprudences, great and sinful irregularities, and strange confusion did they run into at the Lord’s supper, and in the exercise of church discipline! To which may be added, their indecent manner of attending other parts of public worship, their jarring and contention about their teachers, and even the exercise of their extraordinary gifts of prophecy, speaking with tongues, and the like, wherein they spake and acted by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit of God.

And if we see great imprudences, and even sinful irregularities, in some who are great instruments to carry on the work, it will not prove it not to be the work of God. The apostle Peter himself, who was a great, eminently holy, and inspired apostle—and one of the chief instruments of setting up the Christian church in the world—when he was actually engaged in this work, was guilty of a great and sinful error in his conduct; of which the apostle Paul speaks, Gal. ii. 11–13: “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed; for before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles, but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them that were of the circumcision; and the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch, that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.” If a great pillar of the Christian church—one of the chief of those who are the very foundations on which, next to Christ, the whole church is said to be built—was guilty of such an irregularity; is it any wonder if other lesser instruments, who have not that extraordinary conduct of the divine Spirit he had, should be guilty of many irregularities?

And in particular, it is no evidence that a work is not of God if many who are either the subjects or the instruments of it are guilty of too great forwardness to censure others as unconverted. For this may be through mistakes they have embraced concerning the marks by which they are to judge of the hypocrisy and carnality of others; or from not duly apprehending the latitude the Spirit of God uses in the methods of his operations; or from want of making due allowance for

that infirmity and corruption that may be left in the hearts of the saints; as well as through want of a due sense of their own blindness and weakness, and remaining corruption, whereby spiritual pride may have a secret vent this way, under some disguise, and not be discovered.—If we allow that truly pious men may have a great deal of remaining blindness and corruption, and may be liable to mistakes about the marks of hypocrisy, as undoubtedly all will allow, then it is not unaccountable that they should sometimes run into such errors as these. It is as easy, and upon some accounts more easy to be accounted for, why the remaining corruption of good men should sometimes have an unobserved vent this way than most other ways; and without doubt (however lamentable) many holy men have erred in this way.

Lukewarmness in religion is abominable, and zeal an excellent grace, yet above all other Christian virtues, this needs to be strictly watched and searched; for it is that with which corruption, and particularly pride and human passion, is exceedingly apt to mix unobserved. And it is observable that there never was a time of great reformation, to cause a revival of zeal in the church of God, but that it has been attended, in some notable instances, with irregularity, and a running out some way or other into an undue severity.

Thus in the apostles' days, a great deal of zeal was spent about unclean meats, with heat of spirit in Christians one against another, both parties condemning and censuring one another, as not true Christians; when the apostle had charity for both, as influenced by a spirit of real piety: "He that eats," says he, "to the Lord he eats, and giveth God thanks and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." So in the church of Corinth, they had got into a way of extolling some ministers, and censuring others, and were puffed up one against another; but yet these things were no sign that the work then so wonderfully carried on was not the work of God. And after this, when religion was still greatly flourishing in the world, and a Spirit of eminent holiness and zeal prevailed in the Christian church, the zeal of Christians ran out into a very improper and undue severity, in the exercise of church discipline towards delinquents. In some cases they would by no means admit them into their charity and communion though they appeared never so

humble and penitent. And in the days of Constantine the Great, the zeal of Christians against heathenism ran out into a degree of persecution.

So in that glorious revival of religion, at the reformation, zeal in many instances appeared in a very improper severity, and even a degree of persecution; yea, in some of the most eminent reformers; as in the great Calvin in particular. And many in those days of the flourishing of vital religion were guilty of severely censuring others that differed from them in opinion in some points of divinity.

VII. Nor are many errors in judgment, and some delusions of Satan intermixed with the work, any argument that the work in general is not of the Spirit of God. However great a spiritual influence may be, it is not to be expected that the Spirit of God should be given now in the same manner as to the apostles, infallibly to guide them in points of Christian doctrine, so that what they taught might be relied on as a rule to the Christian church. And if many delusions of Satan appear, at the same time that a great religious concern prevails, it is not an argument that the work in general is not the work of God, any more than it was an argument in Egypt, that there were no true miracles wrought there, by the hand of God, because Jannes and Jambres wrought false miracles at the same time by the hand of the devil.

Yea, the same persons may be the subjects of much of the influences of the Spirit of God, and yet in some things be led away by the delusions of Satan, and this be no more of paradox than many other things that are true of real saints, in the present state, where grace dwells with so much corruption, and the new man and the old man subsist together in the same person; and the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil remain for a while together in the same heart. **Many godly persons have undoubtedly in this and other ages, exposed themselves to woeful delusions, by an aptness to lay too much weight on impulses and impressions, as if they were immediate revelations from God, to signify something future, or to direct them where to go, and what to do.**

VIII. If some, who were thought to be wrought upon, fall away into gross errors, or scandalous practices, it is no argument that the work in general is not the work of the Spirit of God. That there are

some counterfeits is no argument that nothing is true: such things are always expected in a time of reformation. If we look into church history, we shall find no instance of any great revival of religion, but what has been attended with many such things.

Instances of this nature in the apostles' days were innumerable; some fell away into gross heresies, others into vile practices, though they seemed to be the subjects of a work of the Spirit—and were accepted for a while amongst those that were truly so, as their brethren and companions—and were not suspected till they went out from them. And some of these were teachers and officers—and eminent persons in the Christian church—whom God had endowed with miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost; as appears by the beginning of the 6th chapter of the Hebrews.

An instance of these was Judas, who was one of the twelve apostles, and had long been constantly united to, and intimately conversant with, a company of truly experienced disciples, without being discovered or suspected till he discovered himself by his scandalous practice. He had been treated by Jesus himself, in all external things, as if he had truly been a disciple, even investing him with the character of apostle, sending him forth to preach the gospel, and enduing him with miraculous gifts of the Spirit. For though Christ knew him, yet he did not then clothe himself with the character of omniscient Judge and searcher of hearts, but acted the part of a minister of the visible church (for he was his Father's minister;) and therefore rejected him not, till he had discovered himself by his scandalous practice; thereby giving an example to guides and rulers of the visible church, not to take it upon them to act the part of searcher of hearts, but to be influenced in their administrations by what is visible and open.

There were some instances then of such apostates, as were esteemed eminently full of the grace of God's Spirit. An instance of this nature probably was Nicolas, one of the seven deacons, who was looked upon by the Christians in Jerusalem, in the time of that extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit, as a man full of the Holy Ghost, and was chosen out of the multitudes of Christians to that office, for that reason; as you may see in Acts vi. 3, 5; yet he afterwards fell away and became the head of a sect of vile heretics, of gross practices, called from his name the sect of the

Nicolaitans, Rev. ii. 6, and 15. (But though these heretics assumed his name, it does not follow that he countenanced their enormities. See Calmet's Dict. Nicolas.)

So in the time of the reformation from popery, how great was the number of those who for a while seemed to join with the reformers, yet fell away into the grossest and most absurd errors and abominable practices. **And it is particularly observable that in times of great pouring out of the Spirit to revive religion in the world, a number of those who for a while seemed to partake in it have fallen off into whimsical and extravagant errors, and gross enthusiasm, boasting of high degrees of spirituality and perfection, censuring and condemning others as carnal.** Thus it was with the Gnostics in the apostles' times; and thus it was with several sects at the Reformation, as Anthony Burgess observes in his book called *Spiritual Refinings*, Part I. Serm. 23. p. 132: "The first worthy reformers, and glorious instruments of God found a bitter conflict herein, so that they were exercised not only with formalists, and traditionary papists on the one side, but men that pretended themselves to be more enlightened than the reformers were, on the other side: hence they called those that did adhere to the Scripture, and would try revelations by it Literists and Vowelists, as men acquainted with the words and vowels of the Scripture, having nothing of the Spirit of God: and wheresoever in any town, the true doctrine of the gospel brake forth to the displacing of popery, presently such opinions arose like tares that came up among the good wheat; whereby great divisions were raised, and the reformation made abominable and odious to the world; as if that had been the sun to give heat and warmth to those worms and serpents to crawl out of the ground.

Hence they inveighed against Luther, and said he had only promulgated a carnal gospel."—Some of the leaders of those wild enthusiasts had been for a while highly esteemed by the first reformers, and peculiarly dear to them.—Thus also in England, at the time when vital religion much prevailed in the days of King Charles I, the interregnum, and Oliver Cromwell, such things as these abounded. And so in New England, in her purest days, when vital piety flourished, such kind of things as these broke out. **Therefore the devil's sowing of such tares is no proof**

that a true work of the Spirit of God is not gloriously carried on.

IX. It is no argument that a work is not from the Spirit of God that it seems to be promoted by ministers insisting very much on the terrors of God's holy law, and that with a great deal of pathos and earnestness. If there be really a hell of such dreadful and never-ending torments, as is generally supposed, of which multitudes are in great danger—and into which the greater part of men in Christian countries do actually from generation to generation fall, for want of a sense of its terribleness, and so for want of taking due care to avoid it—then why is it not proper for those who have the care of souls to take great pains to make men sensible of it? Why should they not be told as much of the truth as can be? If I am in danger of going to hell, I should be glad to know as much as possibly I can of the dreadfulness of it. If I am very prone to neglect due care to avoid it, he does me the best kindness who does most to represent to me the truth of the case, that sets forth my misery and danger in the liveliest manner.

I appeal to every one whether this is not the very course they would take in case of exposedness to any great temporal calamity? **If any of you who are heads of families saw one of your children in a house all on fire, and in imminent danger of being soon consumed in the flames, yet seemed to be very insensible of its danger, and neglected to escape after you had often called to it—would you go on to speak to it only in a cold and indifferent manner? Would not you cry aloud, and call earnestly to it, and represent the danger it was in, and its own folly in delaying, in the most lively manner of which you was capable? Would not nature itself teach this, and oblige you to it?**

If you should continue to speak to it only in a cold manner, as you are wont to do in ordinary conversation about indifferent matters, would not those about you begin to think you were bereft of reason yourself? This is not the way of mankind in temporal affairs of great moment, that require earnest heed and great haste, and about which they are greatly concerned. They are not wont to speak to others of their danger, and warn them but a little or in a cold and indifferent manner. Nature teaches men otherwise. If we who have the care of souls, knew what hell was,

had seen the state of the damned, or by any other means had become sensible how dreadful their case was—and at the same time knew that the greater part of men went thither, and saw our hearers not sensible of their danger—it would be morally impossible for us to avoid most earnestly setting before them the dreadfulness of that misery, and their great exposedness to it, and even to cry aloud to them.

When ministers preach of hell, and warn sinners to avoid it, in a cold manner—though they may say in words that it is infinitely terrible—they contradict themselves. For actions, as I observed before, have a language as well as words. If a preacher's words represent the sinner's state as infinitely dreadful, while his behaviour and manner of speaking contradict it—showing that the preacher does not think so—he defeats his own purpose; for the language of his actions, in such a case, is much more effectual than the bare signification of his words. Not that I think that the law only should be preached: ministers may preach other things too little. The gospel is to be preached as well as the law, and the law is to be preached only to make way for the gospel and in order that it may be preached more effectually. The main work of ministers is to preach the gospel: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." So that a minister would miss it very much if he should insist so much on the terrors of the law, as to forget his Lord, and neglect to preach the gospel; but yet the law is very much to be insisted on, and the preaching of the gospel is like to be in vain without it.

And certainly such earnestness and affection in speaking is beautiful, as becomes the nature and importance of the subject. Not but that there may be such a thing as an indecent boisterousness in a preacher, something besides what naturally arises from the nature of his subject, and in which the matter and manner do not well agree together. **Some talk of it as an unreasonable thing to fright persons to heaven; but I think it is a reasonable thing to endeavour to fright persons away from hell. They stand upon its brink, and are just ready to fall into it, and are senseless of their danger. Is it not a reasonable thing to fright a person out of a house on fire? The word fright is commonly used for sudden, causeless fear, or groundless surprise; but surely a just fear, for which there is good reason, is not to be spoken against under any such name.**

Summary

Jonathan Edwards was a contemporary of the two great English revivalists, John Wesley and George Whitefield. However, he lived in New England. In a letter dated December 12, 1743, which he wrote to a minister in Boston, Edwards recounts the effects George Whitefield's preaching had on his own congregation in October of 1740. His purpose in writing the letter was to explain to a fellow minister the physical manifestations that accompanied what was clearly a sovereign work of God. It is clear from this letter that his own experience dealing with True Believers and Pretenders prompted Edwards to write the work under discussion here as a set of guidelines that Christians could use to judge whether a particular outbreak of religious zealotry was a work of God.

The following is a summary of his list of nine "negative signs" that a particular work is the working of the Spirit of God:

1. The extraordinary nature of a particular physical manifestation of the working of the Holy Spirit cannot be used as an argument against the work itself. The Scriptures plainly state the final outpouring of the Spirit of God will be completely extraordinary, something that the Church has never seen before.

2. The emotional and physical demonstration of those caught up in a particular phenomenon cannot be used as evidence for or against the claim that the phenomenon stems from the sovereign working of God's Spirit. It is only logical that a person on whom the Spirit has impressed the reality that they stand in danger of going to Hell would express a great sense of apprehension and anxiety. However, such an expression does not necessarily *mean* they are responding to the Spirit of God.

3. The public discussion of religion by those involved in a religious awakening cannot be used as evidence that the work is not a valid move of the Spirit of God. The Scriptures indicate that the outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the Apostles was accompanied by just that type of activity.

4. The actions of some of the more ignorant who are deluded by their own imagination cannot be used

to discredit the validity of a particular work. It is a characteristic of human nature to imagine things that are not true.

5. The fact that example plays a role in a work cannot be used as an argument against it. It is to be expected that a new convert will be influenced by the one who converted them and follow their example in both belief and practice. That is, in fact, the means whereby the Church is to be propagated.

6. It cannot be argued that a work is not a valid work of God just because some who claim to be a part of it act in an unchristian manner. Even the Apostle Peter was carried away by the actions of some in the church at Galatia to the point where the Apostle Paul felt it necessary to rebuke him.

7. The delusions of Satan, including that of an immediate revelation from God, mixed in among those who claim to be under the influence of the Spirit of God, cannot be used as evidence that God is not working. Satan always works to lead people away into delusions.

8. The presence of Pretenders among True Believers does not prove that there is no such thing as a True Believer. Satan has always sowed tares in the Church.

9. That those who promote the work preach "fire and brimstone" is not a valid argument in favor of rejecting it as a legitimate work of God. On the contrary, anyone who understands the Truth concerning the terrors of Hell will show their love for sinners by telling them the Truth regarding their desperate circumstance.

Conclusion

I dare say the majority of "evangelical Christian" leaders today would disagree with what Jonathan Edwards has written concerning scaring folks into Heaven, or, as he prefers to put it, "to fright persons away from hell." That's because over the past century evangelical Christians have opted to put their confidence in the "unconditional love of God" goofiness that was concocted by liberal theologians toward the

end of last century. They don't realize that earlier generations of evangelical, "born-again" Christians rejected that insidious doctrine.

Now don't get me wrong. I don't claim to be an "expert" on the subject of the new birth, as I have no doubt John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Finney were. However, I am rapidly becoming a lot more knowledgeable about Pretenders who think they have been born again. That being the case, this one thing I can tell you for a fact: There are millions of "Christians" around the world who have latched on to the lie that tells them everything is all right between themselves and God when they have never once sincerely apologized for the sins they have committed. The reason they have never done so is simple: They don't know that God is going to destroy them if they don't set things straight. Do you know why they don't know that God has already planned their destruction? Because they have never been told.

Now I ask you: Who do you think deserves the greater judgment, the fools who don't believe that God is a God of wrath or the idiots who told them God is not a God of wrath? You can answer that any way you like and it won't change the simple fact that the wrath of God is bearing down hard on a generation of "Christian" Pretenders who have taken a firm stand on the unfounded conviction that God loves them unconditionally merely because they have chosen to believe that God loves them unconditionally.

Every generation of evangelical Christians prior to our own has preached concerning the wrath of God. Now here we stand on the brink of it, and self-proclaimed "experts" all around are suddenly preaching the unconditional love of God. In light of what the Scriptures have to say about the activity of Satan, you would have to be completely unregenerate not to see that he stands behind that unfortunate circumstance. Yet it perfectly fits the Apostle Paul's description of the final generation:

While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.
(1 Thessalonians 5:3)

The implications of that verse are seldom pointed out from the pulpit today. Yet it speaks specifically concerning the circumstances immediately preceding the Return of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the context in

which it occurs reveals nothing but the wrath of God awaits those who willingly choose to remain in the darkness of their own ignorance, blissfully unaware of the Truth. Take a look at what the complete passage says concerning our time:

Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of {the} day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-10)

Some of you have been reading what I have written for nearly five years now. Others of you have just begun. I don't expect those of you who have been reading for three or four years to respond to my message after all this time. But that's just because I'm cynical. Perhaps you will. I have recently seen the power of the Holy Spirit on some of those who have been listening to me for more than twelve years. So I know that anything is possible with God.

If you are not certain of your relationship with God but would like to be, the first lie of Satan that you must give up is the lie that tells you that you have been born again. If you have been born again, you will know it. It is not something you have to guess about. So don't let Satan bring up extraneous issues to confuse you. The only thing that matters is whether or not God has forgiven you. If He hasn't, you are still headed down that broad road to destruction. If He has, you will have no doubt. However, the reason for your certainty will not be because you have chosen to believe that He has forgiven you, but because you experienced the new birth when He did. ■

Revival Is God's Work; Survival Is Man's

The following article contains a portion of Charles Finney's *How to Promote a Revival* (first published in 1879). I have bolded selected portions of the text for the purpose of emphasis. I have also included my own comments before and after the text.

The supreme credo of the Protestant Church must assuredly be the contention that salvation is by faith alone. Yet the discussion of that topic invariably boils down to how to resolve the apparent conflict between legalistic obedience and "faith." I have plowed that ground so often that I needn't get into it here. The problem dissolves on its own when one realizes the issue resides in the *content* of *WHAT* one believes rather than in the fact *THAT* one believes. (See "Some People Will Make Light of Anything," *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1994.)

Here I want to show you how Satan has worked the fine line that separates legalistic obedience and faith so that prominent leaders in the evangelical Protestant Church would distort the Truth just enough that he could twist the result to his own ends. I can do so by showing you what Charles Finney wrote concerning how one should go about promoting a "revival."

You've probably seen a "revival" tent set up in a vacant lot or an open field at one time or another. You may have even heard that the Reverend Billy Graham began his ministry in such a tent. Undoubtedly you have seen or heard advertisements for "revival meetings" that were being held in a local church. You may have even attended a "revival meeting." But have you ever wondered how the concept of holding a "revival" came to be an integral part of Protestant Christianity? This was due in no small part to the writings of one man: Charles Finney.

Now I'm not denigrating the concept of holding a revival for the purpose of evangelizing the lost or

for the purpose of exhorting folks to renew their commitment to Christ. Far from it. I credit the fact that I made it through my teenage years without completely turning my back on Christ to revival meetings and Sunday night altar calls. To my way of thinking, revivals certainly have a leg up on "church renewal" or some other euphemism for the goofy gimmicks they use nowadays to entice Pretenders into attending church twice a week. (I won't even mention the possibility that any might consider three times a week. They have far better things to do.) However, I would be less than candid if I did not tell you the notion of promoting a revival in the sense that Charles Finney used the term has fallen into desuetude over the past half century. That is most certainly the result of Satan's activity. He doesn't care much for folks seeking a closer walk with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

When Charles Finney spoke of revival, he *meant* the "reviving" of True Believers spiritually so that they might again walk in the newness of the resurrected life they experienced when they were first born again. He most often promoted revival by holding a meeting or series of meetings in which he reminded folks of the benefits inherent in serving the Lord and the dangers that reside in their not doing so. In other words, he used the same "fire and brimstone" approach that John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards used.

I'm not going to argue that all the methods Charles Finney used in his revival meetings were necessarily pleasing to God. Nor will I even claim that some of his methods did anything more than convince Pretenders they had "tarried" long enough to deserve God's grace. However, I will tell you that men like Charles Finney and many of the other leaders in the evangelical Protestant Church in his day had experienced something that most evangelical leaders in our own day have not. That is, they had

personal knowledge of what it *means* to be born again. That may not be something that "Christians" today want to hear. It is true, nonetheless. If you want to know why the Church is in the sorry state it is in, you must lay the blame right at the feet of its leaders. When you do, you might be surprised to find that they see nothing wrong with the Church. Those of you who have been born again know better. So now is the time for you to either put up or shut up. God expects better. So you had better do better. Charles Finney has a bit to say that might show you what needs to be done.

How to Promote a Revival

"Break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you."

—Hosea x. 12.

The Jews were a nation of farmers, and it is therefore a common thing in the Scriptures to refer for illustrations to their occupation, and to the scenes with which farmers and shepherds are familiar. The prophet Hosea addresses them as a nation of backsliders; he reproves them for their idolatry, and threatens them with the judgments of God.

A revival consists of two parts: as it respects the Church, and as it respects the ungodly. I shall speak on this occasion of a revival in the Church. Fallow ground is ground which has once been tilled, but which now lies waste, and needs to be broken up and mellowed, before it is suited to receive grain.

If you mean to break up the fallow ground of your hearts, you must begin by looking at your hearts: examine and note the state of your minds, and see where you are. Many never seem to think about this. They pay no attention to their own hearts, and never know whether they are doing well in religion or not; whether they are gaining ground or going back; whether they are fruitful, or lying waste. Now you must draw off your attention from other things, and look into this. Make a business of it. Do not be in a hurry. **Examine thoroughly the state of your hearts, and see where you are: whether you are walking with God every day, or with the devil.**

Self-examination consists in looking at your lives, in considering your actions, in calling up the past, and learning its true character. Look back over

your past history. Take up your individual sins one by one, and look at them. I do not mean that you should just cast a glance at your past life, and see that it has been full of sins, and then go to God and make a sort of general confession, and ask for pardon. That is not the way. You must take them up one by one. It will be a good thing to take a pen and paper, as you go over them, and write them down as they occur to you.

Go over them as carefully as a merchant goes over his books; and as often as a sin comes before your memory, add it to the list. General confessions of sin will never do. Your sins were committed one by one; and as far as you can come at them, they ought to be reviewed and repented of one by one. Now begin, and take up first what are commonly, but improperly, called Sins of Omission.

1. **Ingratitude.** Take this sin, for instance, and write down under that head all the instances you can remember wherein you have received favours from God for which you have never exercised gratitude. How many cases can you remember? Some remarkable providence, some wonderful turn of events, that saved you from ruin. Set down the instances of God's goodness to you when you were in sin, before your conversion, for which you have never been half thankful enough; and the numerous mercies you have received since. How long the catalogue of instances, where your ingratitude has been so black that you are forced to hide your face in confusion! Go on your knees and confess them one by one to God, and ask forgiveness. The very act of confession, by the laws of suggestion, will bring up others to your memory. Put down these! Go over them three or four times in this way, and see what an astonishing number of mercies there are for which you have never thanked God.

2. **Want of love to God.** Think how grieved and alarmed you would be if you discovered any flagging of affection for you in your wife, husband, or children; if you saw another engrossing their hearts, and thoughts, and time. Perhaps in such a case you would well nigh die with a just and virtuous jealousy. Now, God calls Himself a jealous God; and have you not given your heart to other loves and infinitely offended Him?

3. *Neglect of the Bible.* Put down the cases when for perhaps weeks, or longer, God's Word was not a pleasure. Some people, indeed, read over whole chapters in such a way that they could not tell what they had been reading. If so, no wonder that your life is spent at random, and that your religion is such a miserable failure.

4. *Unbelief.* Recall the instances in which you have virtually charged the God of truth with lying, by your unbelief of His express promises and declarations. God has promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. Now, have you believed this? Have you expected Him to answer? Have you not virtually said in your hearts, when you prayed for the Holy Spirit: "I do not believe that I shall receive"? If you have not believed nor expected to receive the blessing which God has expressly promised, you have charged Him with lying.

5. *Neglect of prayer.* Think of the times when you have neglected secret prayer, family prayer, and prayer-meetings; or have prayed in such a way as more grievously to offend God than to have omitted it altogether.

6. *Neglect of the means of grace.* When you have suffered trifling excuses to prevent your attending meetings, have neglected and poured contempt upon the means of salvation, merely from disrelish of spiritual duties.

7. *The manner in which you have performed those duties.* That is, with want of feeling and want of faith, in a worldly frame of mind, so that your words were nothing but a mere chattering of a wretch who did not deserve that God should feel the least care for him. When you have fallen down upon your knees and "said your prayers" in such an unfeeling and careless manner that if you had been put under oath five minutes after you could not have said for what you had been praying.

8. *Want of love for the souls of your fellow-men.* Look round upon your friends and relatives, and remember how little compassion you have felt for them. You have stood by and seen them going right to hell, and it seems as though you did not care. How

many days have there been, in which you failed to make their condition the subject of a single fervent prayer, or to evince any ardent desire for their salvation?

9. *Want of care for the heathen.* Perhaps you have not cared enough for them to attempt to learn their condition; perhaps not even to take a missionary magazine. Look at this, and see how much you really care for the heathen, and set down honestly the real amount of your feelings for them, and your desire for their salvation. Measure your desire for their salvation by the self-denial you practice, in giving of your substance to send them the Gospel. Do you deny yourself even the hurtful superfluities of life, such as tea, coffee, and tobacco? Do you retrench your style of living, and scruple not to subject yourself to any inconvenience to save them? Do you daily pray for them in private? Are you laying by something to put into the treasury of the Lord when you go up to pray? If you are not doing these things, and if your soul is not agonized for the poor benighted heathen, why are you such a hypocrite as to pretend to be a Christian? Why, your profession is an insult to Jesus Christ!

10. *Neglect of family duties.* Think of how you have lived before your family, how you have prayed, what an example you have set before them. What direct efforts do you habitually make for their spiritual good? What duty have you not neglected?

11. *Neglect of watchfulness over your own life.* In how many instances you have hurried over your private duties, and have neither taken yourself to task, nor honestly made up your accounts with God; how often have you entirely neglected to watch your conduct, and, having been off your guard, have sinned before the world, and before the Church, and before God!

12. *Neglect to watch over your brethren.* How often have you broken your covenant that you would watch over them in the Lord? How little do you know or care about the state of their souls? And yet you are under a solemn duty to watch over them. What have you done to make yourself acquainted with them? In how many of them have you interested yourself, to know their spiritual state? Go over the list, and wherever you find

there has been a neglect, write it down. How many times have you seen your brethren growing cold in religion, and have not spoken to them about it? You have seen them beginning to neglect one duty after another, and you did not reprove them, in a brotherly way. You have seen them falling into sin, and you let them go on. And yet you pretend to love them. What a hypocrite! Would you see your wife or child going into disgrace, or falling into the fire, and hold your peace? No, you would not. What do you think of yourself, then, to pretend to love Christians (and to love Christ) while you see them going into disgrace, and yet say nothing to them?

13. *Neglect of self-denial.* There are many professors who are willing to do almost anything in religion, that does not require self-denial. But when they are required to do anything that requires them to deny themselves—oh, that is too much! They think they are doing a great deal for God, and doing about as much as He ought in reason to ask, if they are only doing what they can do just as well as not; but they are not willing to deny themselves any comfort or convenience whatever for the sake of serving the Lord. They will not willingly suffer reproach for the name of Christ. Nor will they deny themselves the luxuries of life, to save a world from hell. So far are they from remembering that self-denial is a condition of discipleship that they do not know what self-denial is. They never have really denied themselves a riband or a pin for Christ and the Gospel. Oh, how soon such professors will be in hell! Some are giving of their abundance, and are giving much, and are ready to complain that others do not give more; when, in truth, they do not themselves give anything that they need, anything that they could enjoy if they kept it. They only give of their surplus wealth; and perhaps that poor woman who puts in her mite has exercised more self-denial than they have in giving thousands.

From these we now turn to Sins of Commission.

14. *Worldly mindedness.* What has been the state of your heart in regard to your worldly possessions? Have you looked at them as really yours—as if you had a right to dispose of them as your own, according to your own will? If you have, write that down. If you have loved property, and sought after it for its own

sake, or to gratify lust or ambition, or a worldly spirit, or to lay it up for your families, you have sinned, and must repent.

15. *Pride.* Recollect all the instances you can, in which you have detected yourself in the exercise of pride. Vanity is a particular form of pride. How many times have you detected yourself in consulting vanity about your dress and appearance? How many times have you thought more, and taken more pains, and spent more time about decorating your body to go to Church, than you have about preparing your mind for the worship of God? You have gone caring more as to how you appeared outwardly, in the sight of mortal man, than how your soul appeared in the sight of the heart-searching God. You have, in fact, set up yourself to be worshipped by them, rather than prepared to worship God yourself. You sought to divide the worship of God's house, to draw off the attention of God's people to look at your pretty appearance. It is in vain to pretend, now, that you do not care anything about having people look at you. Be honest about it! Would you take all this pain about your looks if every person were blind?

16. *Envy.* Look at the cases in which you were envious of those whom you thought were above you in any respect. Or perhaps you have envied those who have been more talented or more useful than yourself. Have you not so envied some, that you have been pained to hear them praised? It has been more agreeable to you to dwell upon their faults than upon their virtues, upon their failures than upon their successes. Be honest with yourself; and if you have harboured this spirit of hell, repent deeply before God, or He will never forgive you.

17. *Censoriousness.* Instances in which you have had a bitter spirit, and spoken of Christians in a manner devoid of charity and love; or charity, which requires you always to hope the best the case will admit, and to put the best construction upon any ambiguous conduct.

18. *Slander.* The times you have spoken behind people's backs of the faults, real or supposed, of members of the Church or others, unnecessarily, or without good reason. This is slander. You need not lie

to be guilty of slander: to tell the truth with the design to injure is slander.

19. *Levity*. How often have you trifled before God as you would not have dared to trifle in the presence of an earthly sovereign? You have either been an atheist, and forgotten that there was a God, or have had less respect for Him, and His presence, than you would have had for an earthly judge.

20. *Lying*. Understand now what lying is. Any species of designed deception. If the deception be not designed, it is not lying. But if you design to make an impression contrary to the naked truth, you lie. Put down all those cases you can recollect. Do not call them by any soft names. God calls them LIES, and charges you with LYING, and you had better charge yourself correctly. How innumerable are the falsehoods perpetuated every day in business, and in social intercourse, by words, and looks, and actions, designed to make an impression on others, for selfish reasons that are contrary to the truth!

21. *Cheating*. Set down all the cases in which you have dealt with an individual, and done to him that which you would not like to have done to you. That is cheating. God has laid down a rule in the case: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." That is the rule. And if you have not done so you are a cheat. Mind, the rule is not that you should do "what you might reasonably expect them to do to you", for that is a rule which would admit of every degree of wickedness. But it is: "As ye would they should do to you."

22. *Hypocrisy*. For instance, in your prayers and confessions to God. Set down the instances in which you have prayed for things you did not really want. And the evidence is, that when you have done praying, you could not tell for what you had prayed. How many times have you confessed sins that you did not mean to break off and when you had no solemn purpose not to repeat them? Yes, have confessed sins when you knew you as much expected to go and repeat them, as you expected to live.

23. *Robbing God*. Think of the instances in which you have misspent your time, squandering the hours

which God gave you to serve Him and save souls, in vain amusements or foolish conversation, in reading novels or doing nothing; cases where you have misapplied your talents and powers of mind; where you have squandered money on your lusts, or spent it for things which you did not need, and which did not contribute to your health, comfort, or usefulness. Perhaps some of you have laid out God's money for tobacco. I will not speak of intoxicating drink, for I presume there is no professor of religion here that would drink it; and I hope there is not one that uses that filthy poison, tobacco. Think of a professor of religion using God's money to poison himself with tobacco!

24. *Bad Temper*. Perhaps you have abused your wife, or your children, or your family, or servants, or neighbours. Write it all down.

25. *Hindering others from being useful*. Perhaps you have weakened their influence by insinuations against them. You have not only robbed God of your own talents, but tied the hands of somebody else. What a wicked servant is he who not only loiters himself but hinders the rest! This is done sometimes by taking their time needlessly; sometimes by destroying Christian confidence in them. Thus you have played into the hands of Satan, and not only showed yourself an idle vagabond, but prevented others from working.

If you find you have committed a fault against an individual, and that individual is within your reach, go and confess it immediately, and get that out of the way. If the individual you have injured is too far off for you to go and see him, sit down and write him a letter confessing the injury. If you have defrauded anybody, send the money, the full amount and the interest.

Go thoroughly to work in all this! Go now! Do not put it off; that will only make the matter worse. Confess to God those sins that have been committed against God, and to man, those sins that have been committed against man. Do not think of getting off by going round the stumblingblocks. Take them up out of the way. In breaking up your fallow ground, you must remove every obstruction. **Things may be left that you think little things, and you may wonder why you do not feel as you wish to feel in religion,**

when the reason is that your proud and carnal mind has covered up something which God required you to confess and remove. Break up all the ground and turn it over. Do not "Balk" it, as the farmers say; do not turn aside for little difficulties; drive the plough right through them, beam deep, and turn the ground up, so that it may all be mellow and soft, and fit to receive the seed and bear fruit "an hundredfold."

26. When you have gone over your whole history in this way, thoroughly, if you will then go over the ground the second time, and give your solemn and fixed attention to it, you will find that the things you have put down will suggest other things of which you have been guilty, connected with them, or near them. Then go over it a third time, and you will recollect other things connected with these. And you will find in the end that you can remember an amount of history, and particular actions, even in this life, which you did not think you would remember in eternity. Unless you take up your sins in this way, and consider them in detail, one by one, you can form no idea of the amount of them. You should go over the list as thoroughly, and as carefully, and as solemnly, as you would if you were just preparing yourself for the Judgment.

As you go over the catalogue of your sins, be sure to resolve upon present and entire reformation. Wherever you find anything wrong, resolve at once, in the strength of God, to sin no more in that way. It will be of no benefit to examine yourself, unless you determine to amend in every particular that which you find wrong in heart, temper, or conduct.

If you find, as you go on with this duty, that your mind is still all dark, cast about you, and you will find there is some reason for the Spirit of God to depart from you. You have not been faithful and thorough. In the progress of such a work you have got to do violence to yourself and bring yourself as a rational being up to this work, with the Bible before you, and try your heart till you do feel. You need not expect that God will work a miracle for you to break up your fallow ground. It is to be done by means. Fasten your attention to the subject of your sins. You cannot look at your sins long and thoroughly and see how bad they are, without feeling and feeling deeply.

Experience fully proves the benefit of going over our history in this way. Set yourself to the work now,

resolve that you will never stop till you find you can pray. You never will have the Spirit of God dwelling in you till you have unravelled this whole mystery of iniquity, and spread out your sins before God. Let there be this deep work of repentance and full confession, this breaking down before God, and you will have as much of the spirit of prayer as your body can bear up under. **The reason why so few Christians know anything about the spirit of prayer is because they never would take the pains to examine themselves properly, and so never knew what it was to have their hearts all broken up in this way.**

27. It will do no good to preach to you while your hearts are in this hardened, and waste, and fallow state. The farmer might just as well sow his grain on the rock. It will bring forth no fruit. This is the reason why there are so many fruitless professors in the Church, and why there is so much outside machinery and so little deep-toned feeling. Look at the Sabbath-school, for instance, and see how much machinery there is and how little of the power of godliness. If you go on in this way the Work of God will continue to harden you, and you will grow worse and worse, just as the rain and snow on an old fallow field make the turf thicker and the clods stronger.

28. Professors of religion should never satisfy themselves, or expect a revival, just by starting out of their slumbers, and blustering about, and talking to sinners. They must get their fallow ground broken up. It is utterly unphilosophical to think of getting engaged in religion in this way. If your fallow ground is broken up, then the way to get more feeling is to go out and see sinners on the road to hell, and talk to them, and guide inquiring souls. Then you will get more feeling. You may get into an excitement without this breaking up; you may show a kind of zeal, but it will not last long, and it will not take hold of sinners, unless your hearts are broken up. The reason is, that you go about mechanically, and have not broken up your fallow ground.

29. And now, finally, will you break up your fallow ground? Will you enter upon the course now pointed out and persevere till you are thoroughly awake? If you fail here, if you do not do this, and get prepared, you can go no farther with me. I have gone

with you as far as it is of any use to go until your fallow ground is broken up. Now, you must make thorough work upon this point, or all I have further to say will do you little good. Nay, it will only harden, and make you worse. If you do not set about this work immediately I shall take it for granted that you do not mean to be revived, that you have forsaken your minister, and mean to let him go up to battle alone. If you do not do this, I charge you with having forsaken Christ, with refusing to repent and do your first works.

Conclusion

Charles Finney has been accused by some of preaching legalism. You can perhaps see why they would say that from some of the things he has written here. There are certainly still some folks around who are laboring under a distorted residual of the message preached by the Holiness Movement of last century. These folks would see nothing wrong with interpreting Finney's exhortation that way. These are the folks who will proudly confess, "I don't drink, and I don't chew, and I don't go with the girls that do!"

However, a legalistic slavery to the Law was not what Finney had in mind. He was trying to formulate a *method* whereby True Believers could use the Law to focus on the Truth of their circumstances so they would more easily respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and act accordingly. That is, he was advocating the use of the Law to define sin. That is its legitimate role. However, you may have noticed that he at times appears to have gone somewhat beyond that in his insistence that a Christian must *do or not do* certain things that are not mentioned in the Ten Commandments or, for that matter, in the Scriptures. That's because Satan was pushing the envelope of his ignorance to make him take a stand on issues that are true, but issues that make sense only in "*The Light*" of a knowledge of *The Apostolic Teaching*. Outside of that knowledge, they lead directly into legalism.

You see, men like Charles Finney, Jonathan Edwards, and John Wesley faced one incredibly harsh reality after they had led a sinner to a personal experience with Jesus Christ. Since the loss of *The Apostolic Teaching* ca. A.D. 200, there has been a serious shortage of spiritual food to feed the True Believer so that he or she might continue on in the faith after the

new-birth experience and grow in a knowledge of Christ. While the leaders of the Protestant Reformation *restored* several doctrines essential to one's experience of the new birth, they were not able to reclaim all of *The Apostolic Teaching*. Consequently, much of the Protestant Christian faith has, from the time of Calvin and Luther, been nothing more than a patchwork of "best guesses" that have remained open for theological discussion. So men like Wesley, Edwards, and Finney found themselves working with a Church that was not only riddled with Pretenders, it was also inhabited by True Believers who were continually confronted with the implied notion that Truth somehow resides somewhere in the many contradictory doctrines they heard taught in the Protestant Church. In other words, these men had no alternative but to tell the True Believer he or she could, within certain limits, pick and choose what to believe and everything would be all right.

That's where the issue of legalism comes right to the fore and stays there. It is impossible for a True Believer to totally overcome sin and remain sinless *without a complete knowledge of the Truth of The Apostolic Teaching*. That's the fly in the ointment as far as the Protestant doctrine of salvation by faith is concerned. Salvation is by faith alone. But that is faith in the sense of *WHAT YOU BELIEVE*, not faith in the sense of *THAT YOU BELIEVE*. Everybody believes something about God. However, only those who believe the Truth that God has revealed will be saved. If you drop off one essential doctrine (the wrath of God, for example), you *will not be saved*.

Wesley, Edwards, and Finney all realized that Christian faith consisted in both belief and action. But they could never see the essential relationship that exists between the two. That's because they were, to some degree, a product of the ignorance that resided in the Church in their time. That ignorance is rapidly being dispelled in our own time. True Believers are now coming to understand the Truth for what it is: a brilliant *Light* that enables them to see clearly the circumstances in which they reside. Those circumstances: The Church is completely dominated by Pretenders who have no knowledge of the God of wrath Who, even now, is plotting their destruction. Moreover, they don't want any knowledge of such a God and will vehemently reject it when they are told. Unfortunately, only belief in the Truth can save. ■



The Voice of Elijah® publishes articles based on the findings of The Elijah Project, a private research group headed by Larry D. Harper. In this column we seek answers to general interest questions concerning the findings, purpose, and philosophy of this project.

Editor: You have been focusing more and more on the new birth in what you write for this newsletter and the things you say in this column. Is that intentional or just what's on your mind at the time? If it is intentional, what do you hope to accomplish by it?

Elijah: The new birth has certainly been on my mind a lot more over the past year than it ever was before. Actually, it has been nearly two years since Mike Clay faced the fact that he had firmly believed a lie Satan told him—that he was born again when he wasn't. (Editor: See "Questions & Answers," *The Voice of Elijah*®, January 1995.) Since that time every one of the individuals I have been teaching for the past fourteen years have admitted they had never been born again. There have even been some in The Next Step program who have come to the same conclusion. Most of these have now repented and been born again. Consequently, they can testify that it is possible to believe Satan's lie and never once consider that, when the Scriptures talk about being "saved," they have in mind a definite reality—the reality of the new birth. These people now know the new birth is an experience—an experience!!—that completely revolutionizes one's life. Therefore, it is not something about which an individual is uncertain. If you have been born again, you know it.

The new birth has also been on my mind a lot lately because I am still a bit uncertain how to fulfill my calling in light of what I now know. I have not been called to evangelize. So I have nothing to say to Pretenders; to people who think they have been born again and yet have not. I have been called to teach True Believers. Nothing that I teach will help Pretenders as long as they choose to go on believing Satan's lie. That's like trying to teach someone who is deaf and blind. They don't have the faculties to hear and understand anything I have to say.

By the way, the deaf and blind imagery is part of the parabolic imagery of *The Teaching*. Jesus was merely conducting parabolic pantomimes when He healed people. So were the Apostles. That's why I am absolutely amazed to hear "Christians" relate the miraculous signs and wonders that they believe God is doing in these Last Days. In some cases it is obvious Satan is working the "signs and false wonders" that Paul says he would in 2 Thessalonians 2:9. What is even more amazing is the fact that nobody considers the possibility that something attributed to God might, in fact, be the work of Satan. Notice I am not naming names and citing instances. I am not going to risk blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Others can do that if they so choose by openly condemning my ministry. But I refuse to put myself in that position.

Back to the issue of why I talk so much about the new birth nowadays ... I am still learning a lot of the things I need to know in order to fulfill my calling. A few years ago, when I began to understand just how many Pretenders were in the Church, I started talking about Pretenders. I intentionally said things and wrote things that were intended to provoke them into rejecting what I had to say. In other words, I tried to get them to reveal who they were by their actions. At that time, I thought the only Pretenders in the Church were the ones who were obviously there for all the wrong reasons. I have since learned just how wrong I was. A Pretender may well be one who attends church for all the right reasons, who wants to please God, who wants to do the right thing, who can see there are Pretenders in the Church, etc. The problem is, this type of Pretender thinks he or she has been born again when, in fact, he or she hasn't. And the really sad part is, they don't know that they don't know. They are like a person who has been given a cubic zirconia and told that it is a diamond. They have

no way of telling whether it is or whether it isn't. They only know it sparkles and looks like a diamond. To determine whether it is the real thing, they have to honestly put it to the test themselves or have it appraised by an expert. If it doesn't pass the test, they must be willing to accept the fact that they have been duped. A lot of people aren't willing to do that. They would rather go on believing Satan's lie.

I can't help those who refuse to examine themselves and their relationship to God. But I can help those who are honestly seeking God, by pointing out the sad Truth about the Church today: The Church is not what God desires, and the reason for that lies completely in the fact that it is filled with Pretenders who are trafficking in religion. These ignorant folks are using the Gospel message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ as nothing more than an elixir—a be-all to end all their troubles and woes.

Do I intentionally *talk about* the new birth? You bet I do. And the reason is simple: Those who have been born again have no doubt they have had an experience with the Spirit of God. Whether or not they have honored the commitment they made to God when He bestowed His Holy Spirit on them is irrelevant. That Spirit is still within them, convicting them of sin, judgment, and the righteousness of God. He is also trying to lead them further in the Truth.

Whether or not these people willingly consent to the leading of the Spirit when they hear the Truth in what I have to say is not my concern. I have been called to minister to those True Believers who will respond to my message, and I have already begun to do so in The Next Step program. Whether or not anyone wants to believe that God called me to do what I am doing is a matter that remains between them and God alone. Some will vehemently reject my calling as nothing more than a figment of my imagination. So be it. I have already explained the risk that one runs in openly rejecting my claim. If they choose to accept that risk, that is also a matter between them and God alone.

Lately I have become a lot more resolute than I have been in the past. I attribute that to the things I have seen in the Scriptures over the past six months or so. There are some absolutely incredible things hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. I have seen things I would never have suspected were hidden there before last January, but now that I know they are

there, I can hardly wait 'til I get the time to look into them further.

Editor: That brings up an issue I have wondered about: Over the years you have pointed out a lot of things in the Scriptures that make perfect sense only when you understand the meaning of the Hebrew idioms and the origin of the parabolic imagery that the Prophets and Apostles used. Some of those things are absolutely phenomenal, not just in the fact that they are obviously what the New Testament writers are talking about, but also in the fact that nobody has ever seen them since the Early Church lost The Apostolic Teaching. How did you come to understand these things?

Elijah: (Chuckling.) You should have said "How do you ...," because the process is ongoing. The last major thing I "saw" in the Hebrew Scriptures was just a week ago. I can't give you a definitive answer that would cover everything I have "seen" in the Scriptures over the years. I remember once mentioning an experience I had when I first understood the *meaning* of the idiom "build a house." (Editor: See "Questions & Answers," *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1992.) At the time, that experience didn't seem unusual to me at all because I had already had several supernatural experiences—visions and the like—and I honestly thought God was revealing things to me out of the Scriptures. Now that I understand my calling, I know that God hasn't revealed anything to anybody since He revealed *The Teaching* to the Apostles. So I don't know what to make of that experience now. It was probably a combination of several things.

Fifteen years ago the things I "saw" in the Scriptures were all related to the idiom "build a house." But I know now that was because Christ had removed only the first seal from the Scriptures. Since then He has removed three other seals. So now we have access to the information hidden in the first four of the seven messages of the Hebrew Scriptures sealed by the seven seals: "*The House*," "*The Way*," "*The Light*," and "*The Name*." I have a general insight into all four of those messages. In some cases I have specific insight. But I am finding that I quite often lack an understanding of some of the things that I need to know in order to put those four messages together in a way that is coherent and easy to understand. However, I am also finding that the things that I'm

teaching The Next Step participants are constantly driving me to find an easier way to explain the things I see in the Scriptures. That's where I have most of the unique experiences I am having today. However, a lot of the new things I "see" in the Scriptures arise from questions I have had that I have never been able to answer to my own satisfaction.

I may have already told you what the Dean of Students said when I entered seminary. In his statements to the entire class during orientation, he told us not to expect to have all our questions answered in the classes we attended. Rather, he suggested that we spend our time gathering all the relevant information concerning the discussion of specific theological issues and mentally put them in a "theological refrigerator" to keep until we felt we had sufficient evidence to answer them to our satisfaction. In other words, we were to learn what questions to ask while we were in seminary and then keep asking those same questions for the remainder of our lives, or until we felt we could answer them for ourselves. Since I firmly believed God had sent me to that particular school for an education, I followed the advice I received that day. Consequently, I rushed headlong into the goofiness known as "theological discussion."

Little did I realize at that time that God had called me to do exactly what theologians have been mindlessly trying to do for centuries. The only difference between this generation and past generations lies in the fact that the time has now come for men to accomplish what theologians have been erroneously claiming could be done before. And the only reason their method will succeed in our own day when it could not before is because Jesus Christ is now removing the seven seals that have sealed the seven messages hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. But I could say that 'til I'm blue in the face and most people would never believe it. In that regard, the prophecy of Habakkuk is being fulfilled right in front of their eyes just as Paul said it would, but they can't "see" it:

*"Take heed therefore, so that the thing spoken of in the Prophets may not come upon {you:}
 'BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH;
 FOR I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS,
 A WORK WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE,
 THOUGH SOMEONE SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU.'"*
 (Acts 13:40-41)

That's another thing I've learned about my calling. I'm not responsible for whether or not people respond to the Truth. I'm only responsible for telling it like it is. Then they can believe it if they care to. Or they can disbelieve it if they dare to. Whether or not they believe what I tell them won't change what I have to do one way or the other. After dealing with the antics of so many Pretenders over the past several years I have become a rather stubborn individual, although I prefer to call my attitude "resolute." That word has a bit more positive ring to it.

I'm joking. I couldn't care less whether people call me "stubborn," "resolute," or just plain "ignorant." Before I'm through doing what God called me to do, a whole lot of people are going to hate me for no reason other than the fact that I've told the Truth and that Truth doesn't agree with the *oral tradition* they have *received* from liars. Knowing that most in the Church today are, like the Pharisees in Jesus' day, hell-bent and tradition-bound, I can do little more for them than ridicule their stupidity, hoping that some of their disciples will come to their senses before it's too late.

Editor: That was a rather enjoyable diatribe. But you seem to be losing some of your edge. What's going on?

Elijah: To tell you the Truth, my heart isn't much into talking to Pretenders any more. Now that I know what God has called me to do—that I haven't been called to teach Pretenders—I don't get as stirred up about the goofiness they believe as I used to. I've also "seen" some things in the Hebrew Scriptures recently that have absolutely astounded me. I can now see how Satan has left his tracks all over the text of Scripture, distorting this passage and that, making people believe that the plain *meaning* of the text is something other than it is. At times I have been left shaking my head in disbelief, not able to believe some of the things I've "seen." Then I look at the text more closely and I "see" why the Truth must be so obviously other than what has become accepted as "common knowledge" in our generation. The older I get, the clearer it becomes to me just how rapidly people who believe Satan's lies are marching lockstep into the Pits of Hell. They won't even consider the possibility that the Church lost *The Teaching* eighteen hundred years ago because they don't understand the wrath of God. They are firmly convinced God is a god of unconditional grace. So why

should I get worked up over something I can't possibly change? I've finally come to the same conclusion the psalmist understood so long ago:

*Unless the LORD builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it; ...
(Psalm 127:1b)*

If someone doesn't see the Truth of what I am saying and act on it, God doesn't expect me to try to convince them. That has been a hard one for me to accept, but I'm getting there. God is going to do what God intends to do in these Last Days, and no amount of ranting or raving by me or the liars who dominate the Church is going to change that simple fact. I'm only just now learning what a foregone conclusion the Prophets' description of events in our own time actually is. The more I understand the Truth, the more I see just how ridiculous all of us are—spouting off about this or that when we know little, if anything, about what is most important. The only thing that is going to count in the End is what God has said. Under those circumstances we had all best make sure we actually understand what God has said rather than just latching on to some pleasant-sounding goofiness that has never been a part of the Christian mind-set prior to our own time.

Editor: *Is that why you have stopped writing articles for The Voice of Elijah® newsletter and instead are just commenting on things that others have written?*

Elijah: No. The Truth is, I don't have the time to write articles for the newsletter like I used to. Most of my time is spent researching and writing commentary for the articles I submit for *The Voice of Elijah® Update*. I have to make sure I get that information right the first time because I am building an iron-clad case against those who want to hold to some Johnny-come-lately *oral tradition* today. I have to demonstrate how the literature of the Early Church clearly demonstrates the Church had the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching* at one time and understood the mission of the Church was to *hand down* that *oral tradition* just as they had *received* it. Then I have to show how the Early Church lost the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching*. When that's done, I'll move on to other things.

I actually spend much more time working on the articles for *The Update* each month than I do preparing the information I send out to The Next Step participants. Yet I personally get much more out of preparing to record The Next Step tapes. The reason for that is simple. I already know most of what is to be found in the Early Church literature. I also know what Justin Martyr and Irenæus have said about the *parabolic imagery* of the Scripture. I know what Clement of Alexandria has said about the secret nature of what the Church in his day taught as "*The Way*." I know where Origen got all the things he taught concerning the "allegorical" nature of the Passover and the primacy of the Book of Proverbs as a guide to the message of the Hebrew Scriptures. But I quite often have no idea what I am going to find when I take a look at the Scriptures in preparation for recording The Next Step tapes.

The thing your readers should understand about the articles I submit for *The Voice of Elijah®* newsletter is this: Until they are ready to reject the garbage the Church is teaching today and go back to certain essential doctrines that the evangelical wing of the Church believed less than two hundred years ago, they will never be able to accept the things I have to tell them. I am selectively pointing out statements made by men like John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, and Charles Finney because these men have already told them a whole lot more than they need to know to be able to see whether they have been born again. I don't need to tell them anything more.

All anyone needs to do now is to evaluate their situation in "*The Light*" of what they learn from reading what these men have already written. But only True Believers—those who have been born again—and Pretenders who are willing to be honest with themselves will be able to do that. I trust they will do so, because I am certainly not here to make it easy for anyone to believe what I have to teach. I'm here to tell the Truth concerning this generation. If someone has a problem with that, or a difficulty accepting my attitude, so be it. God holds me responsible for my beliefs and actions just as He holds them responsible for theirs. I'm certain I know where I stand with God. I expect they feel the same. That's why I'm willing to leave the matter there. Now, if someone wants to be confrontational and contentious ... Well, that just tells us where they stand with God, doesn't it? ■