



THE VOICE of ELIJAH

Pretenders Take After Their Father

Here we shall touch only on the more important points, without attempting to exhaust the subject. Fuller details will be given in subsequent chapters.

We already learn from Paul that the Man of Sin shall be seated in the Temple of God: "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. ii. 9-12) ...

A direct parallel is presented by John 6. 43: "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." I do not know who else can here be understood except the Antichrist. For a perfectly distinct person is spoken of, and the allusion can surely not be to Bar-Cochab. We thus come nearer to a solution of the enigma, how the beast, coming out of the bottomless pit, appears in Jerusalem (Rev. xi.). In the course of our inquiry clear proof will also be given that the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (Matt. xxiv. 15), is the Antichrist. We are ever and everywhere confronted with this spectacle of an Antichrist, who appears in Jerusalem, a godless power, who in the last days rises up amid the holy people, a false Messiah equipped with signs and wonders.

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We now also understand how Hippolytus came to know (chap. vi.) that “in the circumcision the Saviour came into the world, and he [Antichrist] in like manner shall come.” It also becomes clear how the idea occurred to Victorinus of speaking of Nero in such language as this: “Him therefore God having raised up shall send as a king worthy to the worthy [of such], and as a Christ such as the Jews deserved.... And since he shall bring another name, he shall likewise institute another life, so that him the Jews may receive as Christ, [for] saith Daniel (xi. 37), ‘Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women,’ he who heretofore had been most foul, for no one shall be able to seduce the people of circumcision unless [he be himself] a defender of the law.” So universal is the unanimity on this point that it will suffice to adduce one more witness, Jerome on Daniel xi. 21: “But our [expositors] interpret both better and more correctly that at the end of the world these things shall be done by the Antichrist, who is to rise up from a small nation—that is, the nation of the Jews.” ...

Still more clearly and distinctly is now seen the whole aspect of that apocalyptic tradition: an Antichrist is expected, but not from the Roman empire, which, on the contrary, is the power that still bars the way to the appearance of the Antichrist. Hence the godless power, a false Messiah who claims divine worship, arises in Jerusalem in the midst of Israel itself.

M. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1896), pp. 133–135

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A Note From the Editor

This is the second issue of *The Voice of Elijah*® newsletter we have published since adopting our new format. The changes we made beginning with the last issue were intended to make the articles easier to read and to give the entire publication a more pleasing appearance. We trust we succeeded. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding the new format, or questions regarding the subject matter herein, please feel free to write us. Some questions may be able to be addressed in our "Questions & Answers" segment.

To provide our readers easy access to the materials we have already published, we make all of our back issues available, along with other selected publications, via the Order Form on the back page of the newsletter. The books listed on the Order Form are more than just a list of books; they are publications we believe will be especially useful to True Believers in their search to know the Truth.

Because we believe *The Imitation of Christ* is essential reading for every True Believer, we are pleased to offer this publication as an addition to the other selections already listed. Although we hardly agree with everything you find written in this work, we certainly agree with its central message. We hope you will take advantage of this opportunity to gain by the admonishment it provides. You will find an excerpt from an earlier translation of the work in the first article of this newsletter, the one titled "Let Jesus Come Into Your Heart (if You Know What I Mean)."

As always, we are grateful to those who give, whether of their financial resources, of their prayers, of their time in transcribing tapes, or just of their thoughts by suggesting new ways to do things. We especially appreciate the commitments made by all of our readers who have become Monthly Contributors and those of you who are participating in The Next Step program. It all reflects a concern for those Believers who have far, far less than what we have already received.

May you be found faithful to Him when He returns.

Grace and peace to you in Him,

Susan D. Clay

Let Jesus Come Into Your Heart (if You Know What I Mean)

The following article contains my own revision of a translation of a segment of the work commonly known as The Imitation of Christ. 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.

There has been, at least until this present generation, a legitimate mystical side to Christianity—an approach to Christian living in which Believers have sought redemption through a pious focus on the “inner life.” On the surface, such extreme “godliness” might seem worthwhile in and of itself. Yet if one peeks behind the superficial characteristics of religious ecstasy that such mystical devotion portrays to the world, the inevitable question that arises is: “What makes Christian mysticism any more relevant than Hindu mysticism, Buddhist mysticism, Sufi mysticism, Jewish mysticism, or for that matter, any of a thousand other mysticisms that seek the ultimate relationship to God through some vaguely defined ‘inner light’?”

Now don’t get me wrong. I have nothing against seeking God wherever He may be found, whether inwardly, outwardly, or both. However, any avid seeker should nail down one essential issue before rushing headlong into such an endeavor. That issue relates to the various and sundry notions that exist regarding the nature of God. I *mean*, how would the pious mystic ever know that he or she had found the Divine within them unless they had some idea as to Who they were seeking? And thus we come to the single all-important criterion that distinguishes Christian mysticism from all other mysticisms. That criterion is the *content* of the historic Christian beliefs that describe for us the nature of God.

I won’t get into a discussion here as to how Christian beliefs regarding the nature of God have changed over the past two centuries. I’ll just tell you that the God of wrath Who was known to previous generations has now been supplanted by the goofy notion of an unconditionally forgiving god of grace. So if you are a mystical sort, you should keep that in mind, because the things I have to say here pertain to the Former God, not the latter. The latter god doesn’t even exist, except as a figment of the imagination of fools.

A basic knowledge of the history of Christian mysticism is a must for anyone seeking to know the Truth in our generation. That is because mysticism in general, and Christian mysticism in particular, has contributed greatly to the development of much of the oh-so-prevalent idiocy you see exhibited in the Church today.

You see, Satan has not restricted his nefarious activities to the inculcation of high-minded individuals who are only interested in the overtly doctrinal aspects of Christianity. By no means! He has been in there during each and every revival experienced by the Church, working feverishly to capture even the most devout Believers, striving to lead them away from the Truth by bestowing on them some new “insight” into the secret of Christian piety. Unfortunately, the history of Christianity tells us that more than a few unwary mystics have become Satan’s unwitting pawns. Not only have they wandered off into confusion themselves, they have actively sought to carry off as many other dazed individuals as they could find. Hence, we now have a myriad-headed monster instead of the single-minded Apostolic

Church that once knew only the headship of Jesus Christ, the *Living Word* of God.

One can pick up the development of Christian mysticism at any point during the past two thousand years and pursue its course up to our own time. In so doing, he or she will find an unbroken line of mystic leaders who, in all generations, taught a fine blend of Truth and fiction to an even finer blend of charlatans and sincere Believers. I could hardly complete such a survey in these pages, and to tell the truth, I have no interest in ever engaging in such a pursuit.

However, I would like to introduce you to the writings of a Christian mystic who gave added impetus to the fine-tuning of Christian mysticism more than a century before Martin Luther tacked his Ninety-five Theses to the door of Wittenberg church, thereby securing the inception of the Protestant Reformation. Although the author was most likely Roman Catholic to the core himself, his words will nevertheless sound downright "Protestant" to those of you who come out of the "mystical" side of Protestantism. That just goes to show that it doesn't matter what field the plant grows in. It only matters whether it is wheat or tare.

Gerard Groote (1340–1380) was a distinguished professor of theology and philosophy at the university in Cologne until, at the age of thirty, he left academia behind to seek Christ within himself. He was converted by the Carthusians and lived with that order for several years. Later, he fell under the influence of the well-known Flemish mystic Jan van Ruysbroeck. Shortly before his death, he founded the Brethren of the Common Life at Deventer in the Netherlands.

In 1921, a writing that has been attributed to Groote was discovered among other manuscripts in the possession of the Sisters of the Common Life in Lübeck. If the work was indeed written by Groote, it establishes the fact that he was the original author of much of *The Imitation of Christ*, a work usually attributed to Thomas à Kempis, a friend of the Brethren and a biographer of Groote. It is not of paramount importance that we determine who the author of *The Imitation of Christ* actually was. It is enough to know that it originated among Christian mystics.

Most folks don't know that *The Imitation of Christ* is the most widely-distributed book in Christian history (after the Bible). Considering the fact that the Bible still remains a perennial best-seller, that fact speaks

for itself. *The Imitation of Christ* is a must-read for anyone who seeks to make devotion to Christ the focus of their life. Therefore, I commend the practical admonitions of this simple work to you. However, as you read what this individual has written, be aware that many scholars debate whether the work should even be tagged with the label "mysticism." Some refuse to call it mystical in any sense. Others see it as the consummation of all mysticism. I don't see what the big fuss is all about. It is what it is. So I'll leave the question as to whether or not it is mysticism up to you. What was it that Juliet said? "A rose by any other name ..."?

The Imitation of Christ *Book Two: Admonitions* *Concerning Inward Things*

CHAPTER 1 OF THE INWARD LIFE

The Kingdom of God is within you, says the Lord. Turn with your whole heart to the Lord, and forsake this wretched world, and your soul shall find rest. Learn to despise outward things, and to give yourself to things inward, and you shall perceive the Kingdom of God to come in you. For the Kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, which is not given to the unholy. Christ will come unto you, and show you His consolation, if you prepare for Him a worthy abode within you. All His glory and beauty is from within, and there He delights Himself. The inward man he often visited; and has with him sweet discourse, pleasant solace, much peace, familiarity exceedingly wonderful.

O faithful soul! Make ready your heart for this Bridegroom, that He may vouchsafe to come to you and dwell within you. For thus He says, *If any love Me, he will keep My words, and We will come unto him, and will make our abode with him.*

Give therefore a place unto Christ, and deny entrance to all others. When you have Christ, you are rich, and have enough. He Himself will be your provider and faithful steward in all things, so that you need not trust in men. For men soon change, and quickly fail; but *Christ abides forever*, and stands by us firmly unto the end. There is no great trust to be put in a frail and mortal man, even though he be

profitable and dear to us: neither ought we to be much grieved if sometimes he crosses and contradicts us. They that today are with you, tomorrow may be against you; and often again do they turn round like the wind.

2. Put all your trust in God. Let Him be your fear, and your love: He will Himself answer for you, and will do in all things what is best for you. You have not here a continuing city, and wherever you be, you are a foreigner and pilgrim: neither shall you ever have rest, unless you be most inwardly united unto Christ. Why do you gaze about here, since this is not the place of your rest? Your dwelling-place ought to be in Heaven and all earthly things are to be looked upon as it were by the way. All things are passing away, and you together with them. Beware that you not cling to them lest you be caught and perish. Let your *meditation be on the Most High*, and your prayer for mercy directed unto Christ without ceasing.

If you cannot contemplate high and heavenly things, rest yourself in the passion of Christ, and dwell willingly in His sacred wounds. For if you fly devoutly unto the wounds and precious marks of the Lord Jesus, you shall feel great strengthening in tribulation: neither will you much care for the slights of men, and will easily bear words of detraction. Christ was also in the world, despised of men, and in greatest necessity, forsaken by His acquaintance and friends, in the midst of slanders. Christ willed to suffer and be despised: and you dare to complain of any man? Christ had adversaries and backbiters; and you wish to have all men your friends and benefactors? How will your patience attain her crowns, if no adversity befalls you? If you are willing to suffer nothing that is against you, how will you be the friend of Christ? Be strong with Christ, and for Christ, if you desire to reign with Christ. If you had but once perfectly entered into the secrets of the Lord Jesus, and tasted a little of His ardent love, then you would care nothing for your own convenience, or inconvenience, but rather would rejoice at slander offered you; for the love of Jesus makes a man despise himself.

A lover of Jesus and of the Truth, and a true inward Christian, and one free from unruly affections, can freely turn himself unto God, and lift himself above himself in spirit, and with profit remain at rest. He to whom all things taste as they are, and not as they are said or esteemed to be, is truly

wise and taught rather of God than men. He that can live inwardly, and make small reckoning of things without, neither seeks places, nor waits for times, for performing of religious exercises. A spiritual man quickly recollects himself, because he never pours himself out wholly to outward things. He is not hindered by outward labor, or business which may be necessary for the time: but as things fall out, so he accommodates himself to them. He that is well ordered and disposed within himself, cares not for the strange and perverse behavior of men. So much is a man hindered and distracted, in proportion as he draws outward things to himself.

If it were well with you, and you were well purified from sin, all things would fall out to you for good, and to your advancement in holiness. For this cause many things displease, and often trouble you; because you are not yet perfectly dead to yourself, nor separated from all earthly things. **Nothing so defiles and entangles the heart of man, as the impure love of creatures. If you refuse to be comforted from without, you will be able to contemplate the things of Heaven, and often to rejoice within.**

CHAPTER 2 OF HUMBLE SUBMISSION

Count not of great importance who is for you, or against you; but let this be your aim and care, that God be with you in everything you do. Have a good conscience, and God will defend you well. For whomever God wills to help, no man's perverseness will be able to hurt. If you know how to be silent and suffer, without doubt you will see the help of the Lord. He Himself knows the time and manner of delivering you, and therefore you ought to resign yourself to Him. It belongs to God to help, and to deliver from all confusion.

It is often very profitable, to keep us more humble, that others know and rebuke our faults. When a man humbles himself for his faults, then he easily pacifies others, and lightly satisfies those that are offended with him.

2. God protects the humble and delivers him; He loves and comforts the humble; He inclines Himself to the humble man; He gives great grace to the humble; and after his humiliation He raises him to glory. He reveals His secrets to the humble, and sweetly draws and invites him unto Himself.

Although the humble man suffers confusion, he is yet perfectly in peace; for that he rests on God, and not on the world. Do not think that you have made any progress, unless you esteem yourself inferior to all.

CHAPTER 3 OF A GOOD PEACEABLE MAN

Keep yourself first in peace, and then you will be able to pacify others. A peaceable man does more good than he that is well learned. A passionate man turns even good into evil, and easily believes evil. A good peaceable man turns all things to good.

He that is well in peace, is not suspicious of any. But he that is discontented and troubled, is tossed with divers suspicions: he is neither quiet himself, nor suffers others to be quiet. He often speaks that which he ought not to speak; and omits that which were more expedient for him to do. He considers what others are bound to do, and neglects that which he is bound to himself.

First, therefore, have a careful zeal over yourself, and then you may justly be zealous also towards your neighbor. You know well how to excuse and color your own deeds, but you are not willing to receive the excuses of others. It would be more just that you should accuse yourself, and excuse your brother. If you will be borne withal, bear also with another.

2. Behold, how far off you are yet from true charity and humility, which knows not how to be angry with any, or to be moved with indignation, but only against its own self. It is no great matter to associate with the good, and gentle; for this is naturally pleasing to all, and every one willingly enjoys peace, and loves those best that agree with him. But to be able to live peaceably with hard, and perverse, or undisciplined persons, is a great grace, and an exceedingly commendable and manly deed.

3. Some there are that keep themselves in peace, and are in peace also with others. And there are some that neither are in peace themselves, nor leave others to be in peace: They are troublesome to others, but always more troublesome to themselves. And there are those that keep themselves in peace, and study to bring others unto peace.

Nevertheless, our whole peace in this miserable life consists rather in humble sufferings than in not feeling adversities. Whoever knows best how to suffer,

will keep the greatest peace. That man is conqueror of himself, and lord of the world, the friend of Christ, and heir of heaven.

CHAPTER 4 OF A PURE MIND AND SIMPLE INTENTION

By two wings a man is lifted up from earthly things, namely, by Simplicity and Purity. Simplicity ought to be in our intention; Purity in our affection. Simplicity tends toward God; Purity apprehends and tastes Him.

2. No good action will hinder you, if you be inwardly free from inordinate affection. If you intend and seek nothing else but the will of God and the good of your neighbor, you will thoroughly enjoy inward liberty.

If your heart were right, then every creature would be unto you a looking-glass of life, and a book of holy doctrine. There is no creature so small and mean, that it does not set forth the goodness of God. If you were inwardly good and pure, then you would be able to see and understand all things well without hindrance. A pure heart penetrates heaven and hell.

Such as every one is inwardly, so he judges outwardly. If there is joy in the world, surely a man of pure heart possesses it. And if there is tribulation and affliction anywhere, an evil conscience knows it best. As iron put into the fire loses its rust, and becomes altogether white and glowing, so he that wholly turns himself to God, puts off all slothfulness, and is transformed into a new man. When a man begins to grow lukewarm, then he is afraid of a small labor, and willingly receives outward comfort. But when he once begins to overcome himself perfectly, and to walk manfully in the way of God; then he esteems less those things which before he felt grievous to him.

CHAPTER 5 OF THE CONSIDERATION OF ONE'S SELF

We cannot trust over much to ourselves, because grace is often wanting to us, and understanding also. Little light is there in us, and this we quickly lose by our negligence. Oftentimes too we perceive not our inward blindness how great it is. Oftentimes we do evil, and excuse it worse. We are sometimes moved with passion, and we think it zeal. We reprehend small things in others, and pass over our own greater matters. Quickly enough we feel and weigh what we

suffer at the hands of others; but we mind not how much others suffer from us. He that well and rightly considers his own works, will find little cause to judge hardly of another.

2. The inward Christian prefers the care of himself before all other cares. And he that diligently attends to himself, easily keeps silence concerning others. You will never be inwardly devout, unless you be silent concerning other men's matters, and look especially to yourself. If you attend wholly to yourself and God, you will be but little moved with whatever you see abroad.

Where are you, when you are not with yourself? And when you have run over all, what have you then profited, if you have neglected yourself? If you desire peace of mind and true unity of purpose, you must still put all things behind you, and look only on yourself. You shall then make great progress, if you keep yourself at leisure from all temporal care. You shall greatly fall back, if you esteem anything temporal.

3. Let nothing be great to you, nothing high, nothing pleasing, nothing acceptable, except it be simply God, or come from God. Esteem all comfort vain, which comes to you from any creature. A soul that loves God, despises all things that are inferior to God. God alone is everlasting, and of infinite greatness, filling all things; the soul's solace, and the true joy of the heart.

CHAPTER 6 OF THE JOY OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE

The glory of a good man, is the *testimony of a good conscience*. Have a good conscience, and you will always have joy. A good conscience is able to bear very much, and is very joyful in adversities. An evil conscience is always fearful and unquiet.

Sweetly shall you rest if your heart does not blame you. Never rejoice, but when you have done well. Sinners never have true joy nor feel inward peace; because *there is no peace to the wicked, says the Lord*. And if they should say, *We are in peace, no evil shall fall on us, and who shall dare to hurt us?* don't believe them; for the wrath of God will arise suddenly, and their deeds will be brought to nothing and their thoughts will perish.

To glory in tribulation, is no hard thing for him that loves; for so to glory is to glory in the Cross of the Lord. The glory is brief which is given and received

from men. The world's glory is ever accompanied by sorrow.

2. The glory of the good is in their consciences, and not in the tongues of men. The gladness of the just is of God, and in God; and their joy is of the Truth. He that desires true and everlasting glory cares not for that which is temporal. And he that seeks temporal glory, or despises it not from his soul, shows himself to love little the glory of heaven.

He has great tranquillity of heart that cares neither for the praises, nor the fault-finding of men. He will easily be content and pacified, whose conscience is pure. You are not more holy, if you are praised; nor the more worthless, if you are found fault with. What you are, that you are; neither by words can you be made greater than what you are in the sight of God.

If you consider what you are within you, you will not care what men talk of you. Man looks on the countenance, but God on the heart. Man considers the deeds, but God weighs the intentions.

To be always doing well, and to esteem little of one's self, is the sign of a humble soul. To refuse to be comforted by any creature, is a sign of great purity, and inward confidence. He that seeks no witness for himself from without, shows that he has wholly committed himself to God. *For not he that commends himself, the same is approved* (says blessed Paul), *but whom God commends*. **To walk inwardly with God, and not to be kept abroad by any affection, is the state of an inwardly Christian man.**

CHAPTER 7 OF THE LOVE OF JESUS ABOVE ALL THINGS

Blessed is he that understands what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for Jesus' sake. You ought to leave your beloved, for your Beloved; for that Jesus will be loved alone above all things. The love of things created is deceitful and inconstant; the love of Jesus is faithful and persevering. He that clings to a creature, shall fall with that which is subject to fall; he that embraces Jesus shall be made strong for ever.

2. Love Him, and keep Him for your friend, who, when all go away, will not forsake you, nor suffer you to perish in the end. Some time or other you must be separated from all, whether you will or no. Keep close to Jesus both in life and in death, and commit yourself to His faithfulness, who, when all fail, can alone help you.

Your Beloved is of that nature, that He will admit of no rival; but will have your heart alone, and sit on His throne as King. If you could empty yourself perfectly from all creatures, Jesus would willingly dwell with you.

3. Whatever you repose in men, out of Jesus, you shall find almost wholly lost. Do not trust nor lean on a reed shaken by the wind; *for that all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof shall wither away as the flower of grass.*

You will quickly be deceived, if you only look to the outward appearance of men. For if in others you seek your comfort and profit, you will too often feel loss. If you seek in all things Jesus, you will surely find Jesus. But if you seek yourself, you will also find yourself, but to your own destruction. For man is more hurtful to himself if he seeks not Jesus, than the whole world and all his adversaries.

CHAPTER 8 OF FAMILIAR CONVERSE WITH JESUS

When Jesus is present, all is good and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, all is hard. When Jesus speaks not inwardly to us, all other comfort is nothing worth; but if Jesus speaks but one word, we feel great comfort. Did not Mary Magdalene rise immediately from the place where she wept, when Martha said to her, *The Master is come and calls for you?* Happy hour! when Jesus calls from tears to spiritual joy.

How dry and hard you are without Jesus! How foolish and vain, if you desire any thing out of Jesus! Is not this a greater loss, than if you should lose the whole world? What can the world profit you without Jesus? To be without Jesus, is a grievous hell; and to be with Jesus, a sweet paradise. If Jesus be with you, no enemy shall be able to hurt you. He that finds Jesus, finds a good treasure, yea, a Good above all good. And he that loses Jesus loses much indeed, yea, more than the whole world! Most poor is he who lives without Jesus; and he most rich who is well with Jesus.

2. It is great skill to know how to hold converse with Jesus; and to know how to keep Jesus, great wisdom. Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with you. Be devout and quiet, and Jesus will stay with you.

You may soon drive away Jesus, and lose His favor, if you will turn aside to outward things. And if

you should drive Him from you, and lose Him, unto whom will you flee, and whom will you then seek for your friend? Without a friend you cannot live well; and if Jesus is not above all a friend to you, you will be indeed sad and desolate. **You act therefore like an idiot, if you trust or rejoice in any other.** It is preferable to have all the world against us, rather than to have Jesus offended with us. Among all therefore that be dear to us, let Jesus alone be specially beloved.

3. Love all for Jesus, but Jesus for Himself. Jesus Christ alone is singularly to be beloved: Who alone is found good and faithful above all friends. For Him, and in Him, let both friends and foes be dear unto you; and all these are to be prayed for, that He would make them all to know and love Him.

Never desire to be singularly commended or beloved for that pertains only to God, who has none like to Himself. Neither desire that the heart of any should be set on you, nor set your heart on the love of any; but let Jesus be in you, and in every good man.

Be pure and free within, and not entangled with any creature. You ought to be unclothed and ever to carry your heart pure towards God, if you would be free from the world and *see how sweet the Lord is.* And truly, unless you are prevented and drawn by His grace, you will never attain to that happiness, to empty yourself of all, and take leave of all, that you alone may with Him alone be made one. For when the grace of God comes unto a man, then he is made able for all things. And when it goes away, then will he be poor and weak and, as it were, left only to stripes. In this case he ought not to be cast down, nor to despair; but at God's will to stand with even mind, and whatever come upon him to endure it for the glory of Jesus Christ; for after winter follows summer, after night the day returns, and after a tempest a great calm.

CHAPTER 9 OF THE WANT OF ALL COMFORT

It is no hard matter to despise human comfort, when we have divine. It is a great thing, yea, very great, to be able to want both human and divine comfort; and, for God's honor, to be willing cheerfully to endure the heart's banishment; and to seek oneself in nothing, nor to regard one's own merit.

What great matter is it, if at the coming of grace you be cheerful and devout? This hour is wished for

of all men. Sweetly enough he rides whom the grace of God carries. And what marvel if he does not feel his burden, who is borne up by the Almighty, and led by the Sovereign Guide?

We are always willing to have something for our comfort; and with difficulty a man does strip himself of self. The holy martyr Laurence, with his priest, overcame the world, because whatever seemed delightful in the world he despised; and for the love of Christ he patiently suffered the chief priest Sixtus, whom he most dearly loved, to be even taken away from him. By the love of the Creator, therefore, he overcame the love of man; and he rather chose what pleased God, than human comfort. So also learn to leave even a near and dear friend, for the love of God. Nor take it hard, when you are deserted by a friend, as knowing that we all at last must be separated one from another.

A man must strive much and long within himself, before he can learn fully to master himself, and to draw his whole affection unto God. When a man stands on himself, he easily slides to human comforts. But a true lover of Christ, and a diligent follower of virtues does not fall back on comforts, nor seek such sensible sweetnesses; but rather seeks hard exercises, and to bear severe labors for Christ.

2. When therefore spiritual comfort is given you from God, receive it with thanksgiving; but understand that it is the gift of God, not your deserving. Be not puffed up, be not too joyful nor vainly presumptuous; but rather be the more humble for that gift, more wary too and fearful in all your actions; for that hour will pass away, and temptation will follow. When consolation is taken from you, do not immediately despair; but with humility and patience wait for the heavenly visitation; for God is able to give you back again more ample consolation.

This is nothing new nor strange to them that have experience in the way of God; for the great Saints and ancient Prophets had oftentimes experience of such kind of vicissitudes. For which cause, one, while grace was present with him, said, *I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.* But when this grace was absent, what he found in himself he goes on to speak of, saying, *You did turn Your face from me, and I was troubled.* Yet in the midst of all this He does not by any means despair, but more earnestly beseeches the Lord, and says, *To You, O Lord, will I cry,*

and to my God will I complain. At length he receives the fruit of his prayer, and testifies that he was heard, saying, *The Lord has heard me, and taken pity on me; the Lord is become my helper. But wherein? You have turned, says he, my sorrow into joy, and You have compassed me about with gladness.* If great Saints were so dealt with, we that are weak and poor ought not to despair, if we be sometimes fervent and sometimes cold; for the Spirit comes and goes, according to the good pleasure of His own will. For which cause blessed Job said, *You visit him early in the morning, and try him every month.*

3. Where then can I hope, or where ought I to trust, save in the great mercy of God alone, and in the hope alone of heavenly grace? For whether I have with me good men, or religious brethren and faithful friends; whether holy books or fair treatises, or sweet chanting and hymns, all these help but little, and have but little savor, when I am forsaken of grace, and left in my own poverty. At such time there is no better remedy than patience, and the denying of myself according to the will of God.

I never found any so religious and devout, that he had not sometimes a withdrawing of grace, or felt not some decrease of zeal. There was never Saint so high caught up and illuminated, who first or last was not tempted. For he is not worthy of the high contemplation of God, who has not been exercised with some tribulation for God's sake. **Temptation going before is apt to be a sign of ensuring comfort. For to those that are proved by temptations, heavenly comfort is promised.** *He that shall overcome,* says He, *I will give him to eat of the Tree of life.* But divine consolation is given, that a man may be bolder to bear adversities. There follows also temptation, lest he should wax proud of any good. The devil does not sleep, neither is the flesh as yet dead; therefore don't cease to prepare yourself to the battle; for on your right hand and on your left are enemies who never rest.

CHAPTER 10 OF GRATITUDE FOR THE GRACE OF GOD

Why do you seek rest, since you are born to labor? Dispose yourself to patience rather than to comfort, and to the bearing of the Cross, rather than to gladness. What secular person is there that would not willingly receive comfort and spiritual joy, if he could always have it? For spiritual comforts exceed all the delights of the world and pleasures of the flesh.

For all worldly delights are either vain or unclean; but spiritual delights are only pleasant and honest, sprung from virtues, and infused by God into pure minds.

But these divine comforts can no man always enjoy according to his desire; for the time of temptation does not cease. But false freedom of mind and great confidence of ourselves is very contrary to the heavenly visitation. God does well for us in giving the grace of comfort; but man does evil in not returning all again to God with thanksgiving. And therefore the gifts of grace cannot flow in us, because we are unthankful to the Giver, and return them not wholly to the Head-fountain. For grace ever attends him that duly gives thanks; and from the proud will be taken that which is wont to be given to the humble.

I desire not that consolation which takes from me contrition; nor do I aim at that contemplation which leads to haughtiness of mind. For not all that is high, is holy; or all that is sweet, good; nor every desire, pure; nor is every thing that is dear to us, pleasing to God. Willingly do I accept of that grace, whereby I may ever be found more humble, and more full of fear, and may become more ready to renounce myself.

2. He that is taught by the gift of grace and schooled by the rod of its withdrawing, will not dare to attribute any good to himself, but will rather acknowledge himself poor and naked. **Give to God that which is God's, and ascribe to yourself that which is your own; that is, give thanks to God for His grace; and feel that to yourself alone the fault, and the fit punishment of the fault, are due.**

Set yourself always in the lowest place, and the highest will be given to you; for the highest cannot stand without the lowest. The chief Saints before God, are the least before themselves; and the more glorious they are, so much within themselves the humbler. Those that are full of truth and heavenly glory, are not greedy of vain-glory. Those that are firmly settled and grounded in God, can in no way be puffed up. And they that ascribe all to God, whatever good they have received, do not seek glory one of another, but wish for that glory which is from God alone; and desire above all things that God may be praised in them, and in all His Saints; and after this very thing they are ever striving. Be therefore thankful for the least gift, so you will be meet to receive greater. Let

the least be to you even as the greatest, yea the most contemptible gift as of special value. If you consider the worth of the Giver, no gift will seem little, or of too mean esteem. For that cannot be little which is given by the Most High God. Yes, if He should give punishment and stripes, it ought to be a matter of thankfulness; because He always does it for our welfare, whatever He permits to happen to us.

He that desires to keep the grace of God, let him be thankful for grace given, and patient for the taking away thereof; let him pray that it may return; let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it.

CHAPTER 11 HOW FEW ARE THE LOVERS OF THE CROSS OF JESUS

Jesus has now many lovers of His heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of His Cross. Many He has that are desirous of consolation but few of tribulation. Many He finds that share His table but few His fasting. All desire to rejoice with Him, few are willing to endure any thing for Him. Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread; but few to the drinking of the Cup of His Passion. Many reverence His miracles, few follow the shame of His Cross. Many love Jesus so long as no adversities befall them. Many praise and bless Him, so long as they receive any consolations from Him. But if Jesus hide Himself, and leave them but a little while, they fall either into complaining, or into too much dejection of mind.

But they who love Jesus for the sake of Jesus, and not for some special comfort of their own, bless Him in all tribulation and anguish of heart, as well as in the highest comfort. Yes, although He should never be willing to give them comfort, Himself notwithstanding they would ever praise, and wish to be always giving thanks. O how powerful is the pure love of Jesus, which is mixed with no self-interest, or self-love!

Are not all those to be called hirelings, who are ever seeking consolations? Do they not show themselves to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who are always thinking of their own advantage and profit?

2. Where will one be found who is willing to serve God for nothing? Rarely is any one found so spiritual as to be stripped of all things. For who will find a man that is indeed poor in spirit, and stripped

of every created thing? *From afar, yes, above rubies is his price. If a man should give all his substance, yet is it nothing. And if he should practice great penance, still it is little. And if he should attain to all knowledge, still he is afar off. And if he should have great virtue, and very fervent devotion yet there is much wanting to him; especially, one thing, which is for him most chiefly necessary. What is that? That, forsaking all, he forsake himself, and go forth wholly from himself, and retain nothing of self-love. And when he has done all that he knows ought to be done let him think that he has done nothing. Let him not weigh that much, which might be much esteemed; but let him pronounce himself to be in truth an unprofitable servant, as the Truth said, *When you will have done all things that are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants.**

Then may he be truly poor and naked in spirit, and say with the Prophet *I am alone and poor*. Yet no man richer than he, no man more powerful, no man more free: for he is able to leave himself and all things, and to set himself in the lowest place.

CHAPTER 12 OF THE KINGS HIGH WAY OF THE HOLY CROSS

To many this seems a hard sayings, *Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus*. But much harder will it be to hear that last word, *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire*. For they who now willingly hear and follow the word of the Cross, shall not then fear to hear the sentence of everlasting damnation. **This sign of the Cross will be in the heaven, when the Lord shall come to judgment.** Then all the servants of the Cross, who in their lifetime conformed themselves to Christ crucified, will draw near to Christ the Judge with great confidence. Why therefore do you fear to take up the Cross which leads you to a kingdom?

In the Cross is salvation, in the Cross is life, in the Cross is protection against our enemies, in the Cross is infusion of heavenly sweetness, in the Cross is strength of mind, in the Cross joy of Spirit, in the Cross the height of virtue, in the Cross the perfection of holiness. There is no salvation of the soul, nor hope of everlasting life, but in the Cross. Take up therefore your Cross and follow Jesus, and you will go into life everlasting. He went before, bearing His Cross, and died for you on the Cross; that you also may bear your Cross and desire to die on the Cross. For if you

be dead with Him, you will also in like manner live with Him. And if you share His punishment, you will also share His glory.

Behold! in the Cross all consist, and in our dying thereon all lie; for there is no other way to life, and to true inward peace, but the way of the holy Cross, and of daily mortification. Walk where you will, seek whatever you will, you will not find a higher way above, nor a safer way below, than the way of the holy Cross.

Dispose and order all things according to your will and judgment, and you will not find but that you must always suffer somewhat, either willingly or against your will, and so you will ever find the Cross. For either you will feel pain in your body, or in your soul you will suffer tribulation of spirit. Sometimes you will be forsaken of God, sometimes you will be troubled by your neighbor; and, what is more, oftentimes you will weary your own self. Neither can you be delivered or eased by any remedy or comfort; but so long as it pleases God you ought to bear it. For God will have you learn to suffer tribulation without comfort; and that you subject yourself wholly to Him, and by tribulation become more humble. No man so feels from his heart the passion of Christ, as he to whom it has befallen to suffer the like.

The Cross therefore is always ready, and everywhere waits for you. You cannot escape it wherever you run; for wherever you go you carry yourself with you, and ever will find yourself. Turn above, turn below, turn without, turn within, and in all these places you will find the Cross; and everywhere of necessity you must hold fast patience, if you will have inward peace, and win an everlasting crown.

2. If you bear the Cross cheerfully, it will bear you, and lead you to the desired end, where there will be an end of suffering; though here this will not be. If you bear it unwillingly, you make for yourself a load, and burden yourself the more, and yet still you must bear it. If you cast away one cross, without doubt you will find another, and perhaps a heavier one.

Do you think you can escape that which no mortal man could ever avoid? Which of the Saints in the world was without cross and tribulation? For not even our Lord Jesus Christ was ever one hour without the anguish of His Passion, so long as He lived. *Christ, says He, must needs suffer, and rise again from the dead, and so enter into His glory.* And how do you seek any other

way than this royal way, which is the way of the holy Cross? The whole life of Christ was a Cross and Martyrdom; and do you seek rest and joy for yourself? You are deceived, you are deceived, if you seek any other thing than to suffer tribulations; for the whole of this mortal life is full of miseries, and signed on every side with crosses. And the higher a person has advanced in the Spirit, so much the heavier crosses he often finds: because the grief of his banishment increases with his love.

3. Nevertheless, this man, though so many ways afflicted, is not without refreshing comfort, for that he perceived very much fruit to grow to him by the enduring of his own cross. For while he willingly puts himself under it, all the burden of tribulation is turned into the confidence of Divine comfort. And the more the flesh is wasted in affliction, so much the more is the spirit made strong by inward grace. And sometimes he is so strengthened by the desire of tribulation and adversity, for the love of conformity to the Cross of Christ, that he would not wish to be without pain and tribulation; because he believes that he will be to God so much the more acceptable, the more and the heavier things he can suffer for Him.

This is not the power of man, but it is the grace of Christ, which can and does so much in frail flesh; so that what naturally it always abhors and flees from, this by fervor of spirit it does encounter and love. It is not according to man to bear the Cross, to love the Cross, to mortify the body, and bring it into subjection, to flee honors, willingly to suffer reproaches, to despise himself and wish to be despised, to endure all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world. If you look to yourself, nothing of this kind will you be able of yourself to accomplish. But if you trust in the Lord, fortitude will be given you from heaven and the world and the flesh shall be made subject to your sway. Neither will you fear your enemy the devil, if you be armed with faith, and signed with the Cross of Christ.

Set yourself therefore, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the Cross of your Lord, Who out of love for you was crucified. Prepare yourself to bear many adversities and divers troubles in this miserable life; for so it will be with you, wherever you are, and so surely you will find it, wherever you hide yourself. So it must be; nor is there any remedy or means to escape from tribulation and pain of

evils, but only to endure yourself. Drink of the Lord's cup with all your heart, if you desire to be His friend, and to have part with him. As for comforts, leave them to God; let him do as will best please Him. But set yourself to suffer tribulations, and account them the greatest comforts; *for the sufferings of this present time, although you alone could suffer them all, are not worthy to be compared with the future glory which is to be won.*

4. When you will come to this estate, that tribulation will seem sweet, and you will relish it for Christ's sake; then think it to be well with yourself, for you have found Paradise on earth. As long as it is grievous to you to suffer, and you desire to flee it, so long will you be ill at ease, and the desire of escaping tribulation will follow you everywhere. If you set yourself to what you ought, namely, to suffering, and to death, it will quickly be better with you, and you will find peace.

Although you have been caught up even to the third heaven with Paul, you are unto the third heaven where you will suffer no adversity. *I will show him, says Jesus, how great things he must suffer for My name.* To suffer, therefore, remains for you, if it please you to love Jesus, and to serve Him perpetually. O that you were worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus! How great glory would remain for you; what joy would arise to all God's Saints; how great edification also to your neighbor! For all men recommend patience; few, however, are they who are willing to suffer. With great reason ought you cheerfully to suffer some little for Christ; since many suffer more grievous things for the world.

5. **Know for certain, that you ought to lead a dying life. And the more any man dies to himself, so much the more does he begin to live to God. No man is fit to comprehend things heavenly, unless he submit himself to the bearing of adversities for Christ's sake. Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing more wholesome to you in this world, than to suffer cheerfully for Christ.** And if it were for you to choose, you ought rather to suffer adversities for Christ, than to be refreshed with many consolations; because you would thus be more like to Christ, and more conformable to all the Saints. For our worthiness, and the progress of our spiritual estate, does not stand in many sweetnesses and comforts; but rather in thoroughly enduring great afflictions and tribulations.

Indeed, if there had been any better thing, and more profitable to a man's salvation, than suffering, surely Christ would have shown it by word and example. For both the disciples that followed Him, and all who desire to follow Him, he plainly exhorts to the bearing of the Cross, and says, *If any will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and follow Me.* So that when we have read to the end and searched through all, let this be the final conclusion, *That through many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God.*

Conclusion

Did you read the foregoing excerpt closely? Can you find fault with the general tenor of what our good brother has written? I would be surprised if you could, considering the fact that it is based squarely on admonitions found throughout the Scriptures. However, there are several troublesome questions left unanswered by the things you have just read. For example, what does he *mean* when he says:

When Jesus is present, all is good and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, all is hard. When Jesus speaks not inwardly to us, all other comfort is nothing worth; but if Jesus speaks but one word, we feel great comfort.

That certainly seems to have mystical overtones, doesn't it? Who is this inward "Jesus" the fellow is *talking about*? If I sincerely want to follow his admonitions, how can I be certain that the "Jesus" he had in mind is the same "Jesus" that I have found? Is it the same "Jesus" known to folks today who hold a radically different view as to what Christianity is all about? The basic issue is, when Jesus said "*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me*" (John 14:6) doesn't that *mean* that if one fellow has this "Jesus"—Who said He was *The Truth*—"in his heart" that he would pretty much agree with anyone else who had that same Jesus "in his heart"?

You see, the puzzlement in all this is how one should view all those deluded "believers" around us today who don't come closer than a million light years away from the extreme dedication this fellow advocates. Yet they, nonetheless, arrogantly claim to

have "given their heart to the Lord." They emphatically state they have "turned to Jesus." So who am I to say they haven't?

Well, I'm here to tell you that, contrary to their idiotic assertions, they haven't. They have just opted for another perverted form of mysticism. But mysticism is not the problem, folks. Liars are. Mysticism is not the answer either, folks. The Truth is. So you can go on looking for the Truth within you if you care to. Or you can start looking for it in the great outdoors, if you dare to. But one way or the other, you will eventually stand toe-to-toe and eye-to-eye with the One Who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." All the lies you have chosen to believe won't do you any good then. On that Great Day you will be facing the ultimate test of your character, and the only question that will remain to be answered is this: Does He recognize the person that you are?

The fellow who wrote *The Imitation of Christ* may or may not have had a valid born-again experience. I can't say one way or the other. Whether he did or whether he didn't is not important to us here, however, because his words do have a certain ring of Truth to them. That must be because he, or somebody with whom he was closely associated, had been born again. So that person understood that the secret to living an overcoming Christian life is to hear the Truth, believe the Truth, and cling tightly to the Truth, no matter how small a portion of the Truth you have heard.

Our generation has lost sight of that simple fact, due in no small part to the fact that the pompous, pious, egotistical teachers in our generation have gone on to bigger and better things. That is, the things considered most important by "Christian" leaders today are either esoteric doctrines that make not a whit of difference in how we conduct our daily lives, or a political activism that has nothing whatsoever to do with the *Kingdom of God*, or the superficial glad-handing that Satan has managed to substitute in place of honest devotion to Christ.

Devout "Christians" all around you are *talking about* the Return of Jesus Christ as though that were a good thing for everyone, aren't they? Well, folks, I'm here to tell it bodes nothing good for those who aren't striving to accomplish the things mentioned in *The Imitation of Christ*. One of those devout "Christians" could well be you. You can deny that if you care to.

That would only prove you haven't read your Bible as closely as you should have. Jesus said this:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"
(Matthew 7:21-23)

Now either Jesus was just kidding around or He has just told us there are going to be some devoutly religious types who get so caught up in Satan's "lying signs and wonders" that they neglect to pay attention to the things that God considers most valuable. So if you have ever had a valid born-again experience with God, you had best get on with doing what you understood God expected you to do when you first repented. If you don't know what that is, the chances are you were never "born again" in the first place. Therefore, I heartily recommend that you contemplate what Jesus said in the passage above. He could well have been *talking about you*.

The Truth is, folks, we are plunging headlong into the most incredible time human history has ever known. The terrible storms that will occur before the End are only just now beginning. Not only will those storms become more intense, they will also occur more frequently. The sheer magnitude of the human suffering that occurs over the next several years will provide "Christians" ample opportunity to view God's wrath up close and firsthand. Yet most will never consider that those things are intended to make them focus on their own desperate circumstances. Instead, the hilarity and outrageous things that even now masquerade as Christianity will become more ridiculous as Satan mocks God by inciting people to do all sorts of idiotic things in the name of Christ.

Now I am not so naïve as to think that any of you are going to believe what I write just because I wrote it, or that you are going to accept the fact that God called me to do what I am doing just because I said so. I realize that you are smart enough to know you encounter all kinds of frauds preaching a wide variety of folly in the Church today. So you are naturally leery of anyone

who comes making preposterous claims. But consider this: What better way for Satan to discredit the Truth than to introduce doubt into the minds of those who might otherwise seek to know it? Think about that. If you doubt that anyone actually knows the Truth, how could you ever come to know the Truth?

A primary purpose I have in writing the things I write is to give the doubters among you good reason to believe I am nothing more than another twisted individual circumnavigating the lunatic fringe. The opinion of know-nothing skeptics doesn't bother me in the least. The religious mainstream in the time of Jesus considered Him to be mentally deranged. Why should I expect anything different from religious high-brows in this generation? I am not appealing to doubters, however, I am appealing to those few stray sheep who are not absolutely convinced that this generation of shepherds has actually been called of God to shepherd God's sheep.

If you have ever had a valid born-again experience, I ask you to consider what I am saying. God has not called me to reach the unsaved. He has called me to prepare born-again Believers for the Return of Jesus Christ. That may sound preposterous, but take a look around you. Do you see anyone doing anything more than recycling old clichés by wrapping them in new packages? Don't you ever have a hunch there was originally more to Christianity than worn-out clichés and traditional ways of thinking?

God called me to provide all the information True Believers need to be able to mature in Christ. However, He has also given me a much more basic reason for doing what I do. That is *the weeding out of Pretenders*. I intend to accomplish both of those objectives by bluntly telling you exactly why I am doing what I am doing. That way, if you don't show by what you do that you believe the things I write, you have already proven yourself to be exactly what you are: an unbeliever. I can state that confidently because I know one Truth to be true above all others: People always act in accordance with what they believe. Always. ■

Hell Hath No Fury ...

(and Other Lies That Fools Believe)

The following article contains a reprint of Charles Finney's article "Self Deceivers," from his work *Lectures to Professing Christians* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1878). 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.

Charles Finney (1792–1875) was a "fire and brimstone" preaching Presbyterian minister born just over two centuries ago. His evangelistic ministry spanned six decades and saw thousands come under the heavy conviction of the Holy Spirit and "pray through" to the newness of life that results from the new birth. Although evangelical "Christians" of all stripe pay homage to the efforts of this great Evangelist today, most would undoubtedly condemn him for his "heavy-handed" methods and the "hell-fire and damnation" message he preached. After all, Evangelicals in general and Presbyterians in particular have long since moved away from the notion of a God of Wrath to fervently embrace the Satanic illusion of an unconditionally forgiving god of grace.

Finney was also a contemporary of the village idiot and aspiring philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). (See "Satan's Fools Are Satan's Tools," *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1994.) However, about all these two men had in common was the fact that they were contemporaries. Kierkegaard was a mentally twisted and perverted little man who carried about a bitterness and venom that easily rivaled that of a king cobra. His only claim to fame lies in the fact that he left his ignorant speculations in writings that men of lesser intellect than he would later pick up and use to make idiotic rambling a philosophical art-form.

In contrast to the arrogant individual that Kierkegaard became in the later years of his short life, Charles Finney was brought to his knees as a young man through the overwhelming conviction of the Holy Spirit. He emerged from that confrontation with an experiential knowledge of the ringing *Word of Truth*. He subsequently preached that Word with astounding results. (See "Charles Finney: My Conversion to Christ" and "One Train. One Track. Two Rails." *The Voice of Elijah*®, January 1992.)

Finney's preaching was effective because, like that of John Wesley, it left few "gray areas" in which Pretenders could easily rationalize the Truth they heard. Although the most resolute Pretenders undoubtedly sat through his preaching totally unfazed by the Truth they heard, thousands more responded with sincere repentance and an honest desire to know the God he preached.

The God that Charles Finney knew and preached was not the goofy god of grace that most "Christians" serve today. By no means! His was a God of unmitigated vengeance and wrath, a God Who demanded that every Believer deny himself or herself and live a life of complete dedication to Him alone. Most "Christians" in our day not only have no interest in knowing that God, they readily find fault with Him for His lack of "Christian" compassion. Unfortunately, folks, I'm here to tell you the God of wrath that Charles Finney preached is the only God that exists. There is no other god, be it god of grace or god of unconditional compassion.

The ever-loving, all-forgiving god of grace conjured up by dolts like those who picked up the goofiness of Søren Kierkegaard is nothing more than the figment of the imagination of fools anyway. And the idiotic concept doesn't gain any more validity just

because the evangelical wing of the Protestant Church has, over the past century, gradually borrowed it from the liberal theologians who fabricated this goofy god of grace as a god more to their liking around the turn of the last century. Liberal theologians have no corner on stupidity. Folly comes in all theological persuasions. Keep that in mind as you read what Finney had to say about Pretenders. He knew whereof he spoke.

SELF DECEIVERS

Be ye doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

(James 1:22)

There are two extremes in religion, equally false and equally fatal. And there are two classes of hypocrites that occupy these two extremes. The first class make religion to consist altogether in the belief of certain abstract doctrines, or what they call faith, and lay little or no stress on good works. The other class make religion to consist altogether in good works, (I mean, dead works) and lay little or no stress on faith in Jesus Christ, but hope for salvation by their own deeds.

The Jews belonged generally to the last-mentioned class. Their religious teachers taught them that they would be saved by obedience to the ceremonial law. And therefore, when Paul began to preach, he seems to have attacked more especially this error of the Jews. He was determined to carry the main question, that men are justified by faith in Jesus Christ, in opposition to the doctrine of the scribes and pharisees, that salvation is by obedience to the law. And he pressed this point so earnestly, in his preaching and in his epistles, that he carried it, and settled the faith of the church in the great doctrine of justification by faith. And then certain individuals in the church laid hold of this doctrine and carried it to the opposite extreme, and maintained that men are saved by faith altogether, irrespective of works of any kind. They overlooked the plain principle, that genuine faith always results in good works, and is itself a good work.

I said that these two extremes, that which makes religion to consist altogether in outward works and that which makes it consist altogether in faith, are equally false and equally fatal. Those who make religion consist

altogether in good works, overlook the fact that works themselves are not acceptable to God unless they proceed from faith. For without faith it is impossible to please Him. And those who make religion consist altogether in faith overlook the fact that true faith always works by love, and invariably produces the works of love.

They are equally fatal, because, on the one hand, without faith persons cannot be pardoned or justified; and on the other, without sanctification they cannot be fitted either for the employments or enjoyments of heaven. **Let a sinner turn from his sins altogether, and suppose his works to be as perfect as he thinks them to be, and yet he could not be pardoned without faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ.** And so if any one supposed that he could be justified by faith while his works were evil, he ought to know that without sanctification his faith is but dead, and cannot even be the instrument of his justification.

It appears that the apostle James, in this epistle, designed to put this matter upon the right ground, and show exactly where the truth lay, and to explain the necessity, and reason of the necessity, of both faith and good works. This epistle is a very practical one, and it meets full in the face all the great practical questions of the day, and decides them.

Doctrines in religion are of two classes, those which refer to God, and those which refer to human practice. Many confine their idea of religious doctrines to the former class. They think nothing is properly called doctrine but what respects God, his attributes, mode of existence, decrees, and so on. When I gave notice that I should commence a course of "Practical Lectures," I hope you did not understand me to mean that the lectures would not be doctrinal, or would have no doctrine in them. My design is to preach, if the Lord will, a course of lectures on practical doctrines. The doctrine which I propose to consider now, is this—That professor of religion who does not practice what he admits to be true, is self-deceived.

There are two classes of hypocrites among professors of religion, those that deceive others and those that deceive themselves. One class of hypocrites are those that, under a specious outside of morality and religion, cover up the enmity of their hearts against God, and lead others to think they are very pious people. Thus the pharisees obtained the reputation of

being remarkably pious, by their outside show of religion, their alms and their long prayers.

The other class is that referred to in the text, who do not deceive others but themselves. These are orthodox in sentiment, but loose in practice. They seem to suppose religion to consist in a parcel of notions, without regard to practice, and thus deceive themselves by thinking they are good Christians while destitute of true holiness. They are hearers of the word but not doers. They love orthodox preaching, and take great pleasure in hearing the abstract doctrines of religion exhibited, and perhaps have flights of imagination and glowing feelings in view of the character and government of God, but they are not careful to practise the precepts of God's word, nor are they pleased with the preaching of those doctrines which relate to human practice.

Perhaps there are some present tonight of both these classes of hypocrites. Now mark! I am not going to preach tonight to those of you who, by great strictness of morals and outside show of religion, deceive others. I address, now, those of you who do not practise what you know to be true—who are hearers and not doers. Perhaps I had better say, to secure attention, that it is very probable there are a number here now of this character. I do not know your names; but I wish you to understand, that if you are that character, you are the persons I am speaking to, just as if I called out your names. I mean you. You hear the word, and believe it in theory, while you deny it in practice. I say to you, that "you deceive yourselves." The text proves it. Here you have an express "Thus saith the Lord" for it, that all such characters are self-deceivers. I might quote a number of other passages of Scripture, that are to the point, and there leave it. But I wish to call your attention to some other considerations beside the direct scripture testimony.

In the first place, you do not *truly* believe the word. You hear it, and admit it to be true, but you do not truly believe it. And here let me say, that persons are themselves liable to deception on this point. Not that their consciousness deceives them, but they do not understand what it is that consciousness testifies. **Two things are indispensable to evangelical, or saving faith. The first is, intellectual conviction of the truth of a thing. And here I do not mean merely the abstract truth of it, but in its bearing on you. The truth, in its relation to you, or its bearing on your conduct, must be received intellectually. And then**

true faith includes a corresponding state of the heart. This always enters into the essence of true faith. When a man's understanding is convinced, and he admits the truth in its relation to himself, then there must be a hearty approbation of it in its bearing or relation to himself. Both these states of mind are indispensable to true faith. Intellectual conviction of the truth is not saving faith. But intellectual conviction, when accompanied with a corresponding state of the affections, is saving faith. Hence it follows that where there is true saving faith, there is always corresponding conduct. The conduct always follows the real faith. Just as certain as the will controls the conduct, men will act as they believe. Suppose I say to a man, Do you believe this? "Yes, I believe it." What does he mean? A mere intellectual conviction? He may have that, and yet not have faith.

A man may even feel an approbation of an abstract truth. This is what many persons suppose to be faith—the approbation which they feel for the character and government of God, and for the plan of salvation, when viewed abstractly. Many persons, when they hear an eloquent sermon on the attributes or government of God, are set all in a glow at the excellency displayed, when they have not a particle of true faith. I have heard of an infidel, who would be moved even to ecstasy at such themes.

The rational mind is so constituted that it naturally and necessarily approves of truth when viewed abstractedly. The wickedest devils in hell love it, if they can see it without its relation to themselves. If they could see the gospel without any relation that interferes with their own selfishness, they would not only see it to be true, but would heartily approve of it. All hell, if they could view God in his absolute existence, without any relation to themselves, would heartily approve his character. The reason why wicked men and devils hate God is, because they see him in relation to themselves. Their hearts rise up in rebellion, because they see him opposed to their selfishness.

Here is the source of a grand delusion among men in regard to religion. They see it to be true, and they really rejoice in contemplating it; they do not enter into its relation to themselves, and so they love to hear such preaching, and say they are fed by it. But mark! They go away and do not practise. See that man! he is sick, and his feelings are tender. In view of Christ, as a kind and tender Saviour, his heart melts

and he feels strong emotions of approbation towards Jesus Christ. Why? For the very same reasons that he would feel strong emotions toward the hero of a romance. But he does not obey Christ. He never practises one thing out of obedience to Christ, but views him abstractedly, and is delighted with his glorious and lovely character, while he himself remains in the gall of bitterness. Thus it is apparent that your faith must be efficient faith, such as regulates your practice and produces good works, or it is not the faith of the gospel, it is no real faith at all.

Again. It is further manifest that you are deceiving yourselves, because all true religion consists in obedience. And therefore, however much you may approve of Christianity, you have no religion unless you obey it. **In saying that all religion consists in obedience, I do not mean OUTWARD obedience. But faith itself, true faith, works by love, and produces corresponding action. There is no real obedience but the obedience of the heart; love is the fulfilling of the law; and religion consists in the obedience of the heart, with a corresponding course of life. The man, therefore, who hears the truth, and approves it, and does not practise it, deceiveth himself.** He is like the man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of a man he was.

Again. That state of mind which you mistake for religion, an intellectual conviction of truth, and approval of it in the abstract, so far from being evidence that you are pious, is as common to the wicked as to the good, whenever they can be brought to look at it abstractedly. This is the reason why it is often so difficult to convince sinners that they are opposed to God and his truth. Men are so constituted that they do approve of virtue, and do admire the character and government of God, and would approve and admire every truth in the Bible, if they could view it abstractedly, and without any relation to themselves. And when they sit under preaching that holds up the truth in such a way, that it has not much of a practical bearing on themselves, they may sit for years and never consider that they are opposed to God and his government.

And I am more and more persuaded, that great multitudes are to be found in all our congregations, where the abstract doctrines of the gospel are much preached, who like the preaching and like to hear

about God, and all these things, and yet are unconverted. And no doubt multitudes of them get into the churches, because they love orthodox preaching, when, after all, it is manifest that they are not doers of the Word. And here is the difficulty; they have not had that searching preaching that made them see the truth in its bearing on themselves. And now they are in the church, whenever the truth is preached in its practical relation to them, they show the enmity of their hearts unchanged, by rising up in opposition to truth.

They took it for granted that they were Christians, and so joined the church, because they could hear sound doctrinal preaching and approve of it, or because they read the Bible and approved of it. If their faith be not so practical as to influence their conduct, if they do not view the truth in its relation to their own practice, their faith does not affect them so much as the FAITH OF THE DEVIL.

REMARKS

1. Great injury has been done by false representations regarding the wickedness of real Christians. A celebrated preacher, not long since, is said to have given this definition of a Christian—"A little grace and a great deal of devil." I utterly deny this definition. It is false and ruinous. A great deal is said that makes an impression that real Christians are the wickedest beings on the face of the earth. It is true that when they do sin they incur great guilt. For a Christian to sin is highly criminal. And it is also true that enlightened Christians see in their sins great wickedness.

When they compare their obligations with their lives, they are greatly humbled, and express their humility in very strong language. But it is not true that they are as bad as the devil, or anywhere in the neighborhood of it. This is perfectly demonstrable. When they do sin, their sins have great aggravation, and appear extremely wicked in the sight of God. But to suppose that men are real Christians while they live in the service of the devil, and have little of even the appearance of religion, is a sentiment that is not only false but of very dangerous tendency. It is calculated to encourage all that class of hypocrites who are Antinomians, and to encourage backsliders, as well as to do a great injury to the cause of Christ in the estimation of scorners.

The truth is, those who do not obey God are not Christians. The contrary doctrine is ruinous to the churches, by filling them up with multitudes whose claim to piety depends on their adoption of certain notions, while they never heartily intended to obey the requirements of the gospel in their lives.

2. Those who are so much more zealous for doctrines than for practice, and who lay much more stress on that class of doctrines which relate to God than on that class which relate to their own conduct, are Antinomians. **There are many who will receive that class of the doctrines of the Bible which relate to God and approve and love them, who have not a particle of religion.** Those who are never "fed," as they call it, on any preaching but that of certain abstract points of doctrine, are Antinomians. They are the very persons against whom the apostle James wrote this epistle. They make religion to consist in a set of notions, while they do not lead holy lives.

3. That class of professors of religion who never like to hear about God or his attributes, or mode of existence, the Trinity, decrees, election, and the like, but lay all stress on religious practice to the exclusion of religious doctrine, are pharisees. They make great pretensions to outward piety, and perhaps to inward flights of emotion of a certain poetical cast, while they will not receive the great truths that relate to God, but deny the fundamental doctrines of the gospel.

4. The proper end and tendency of all right doctrine, when truly believed, is to produce correct practice. Wherever you find a man's practice heretical, you may be sure his belief is heretical too. The faith that he holds in his heart is just as heretical as his life. He may not be heretical in his notions and theories. He may be right there, even on the very points where he is heretical in practice. But he does not really believe it.

For illustration: See that careless sinner there, grasping wealth, and rushing headlong in the search for riches. Does that man truly believe he is ever going to die? Perhaps you will say, he knows he must die. But I say, while he is in this attitude, he does not actually believe he is ever going to die. The subject is one which is not before his thoughts at all. And thus it is, therefore, impossible that he should believe it in his utter thoughtlessness. You ask him if he expect ever to die, and he will reply, "O yes, I know I must die; all men are mortal." As soon as he turns his thoughts to

it, he assents to the truth. And if you could fasten the conviction on his mind till he is really and permanently impressed with it, he would infallibly change his conduct, and live for another world instead of this. It is just so in religion; whatever a man really believes is just as certain to control his practice as that the will governs the conduct.

5. The church has for a long time acted too much on the Antinomian policy. She has been sticklish for the more abstract doctrines, and left the more practical too much out of view. She has laid greater stress on orthodoxy in those doctrines that are not practical, than in those that are practical. Look at the creeds of the church, and see how they all lay the main stress on those doctrines that have little relation to our practice.

A man may be the greatest heretic on points of practice, provided he is not openly profane and vicious, and yet maintain a good standing in the church, whether his life corresponds with the gospel or not. Is not this monstrous? And hence we see that when it is attempted to purify the church in regard to practical errors, she cannot bear it. Why else is it that so much excitement is produced by attempting to clear the church from participation in sins of intemperance, and Sabbath-breaking, and slavery? Why is it so difficult to induce the church to do anything effectual for the conversion of the world? Oh, when shall the church be purified, or the world converted? Not till it is a settled point, that heresy in practice is the proof of heresy in belief. Not while a man may deny the whole gospel in his practice every day, and yet maintain his standing in the church as a good Christian.

6. See how a minister may be deceived in regard to the state of his congregation. He preaches a good deal on the abstract doctrines, that do not immediately relate to practice, and his people say they are fed, and rejoice in it, and he thinks they are growing in grace, when in fact it is no certain sign that there is any religion among them. It is manifest that this is not certain evidence. But if when he preaches practical doctrines, his people show that they love the truth in relation to themselves, and show it by practising it, then they give evidence of real love to the truth.

If a minister find that his people love abstract doctrinal preaching, but that when he comes to press the practical doctrines they rebel, he may be sure that if they have any religion, it is in a low state; and if he find, on fair trial, that he cannot bring them up to it,

so as to receive practical doctrine, he may be satisfied they have not a particle of religion, but are a mere company of Antinomians, who think they can go to heaven on a dead faith in abstract orthodoxy.

7. See what a vast multitude of professors of religion there are who are deceiving themselves. Many suppose they are Christians from the emotions they feel in view of the truth, when in fact what they receive is truth presented to their minds in such a way that they do not see its bearing on themselves. If you bring the truth so to bear on them, as to destroy their pride and cut them off from their worldliness, such professors resist it.

Look abroad upon the church. See what a multitude of orthodox churches and orthodox Christians live and feed upon the abstract doctrines of religion from year to year. Then look farther at their lives, and see how little influence their professed belief has upon their practice. Have they saving faith? It cannot be. I do not mean to say that none of these church members are pious, but I do say that those who do not adopt in practice what they admit in theory—who are hearers of the word but not doers, deceive themselves.

Inquire now how many of you really believe the truth you hear preached. I have proposed to preach a course of “practical” lectures. I do not mean that I shall preach lectures that have no doctrine in them. That is not preaching at all. But what I desire is, to see whether you will, as a church, do what you believe to be true. If I do not succeed in convincing you that any doctrine I may maintain is really true, that is another affair. That is reason enough why you should not do it. But if I do succeed in proving from the Scriptures, and convincing your understanding, that it is true, and yet you do not practice it, I shall then have the evidence before my own eyes what your character is, and no longer deceive myself with the idea that this is a Christian church.

Are you conscious that the gospel is producing a practical effect upon you, according to your advancement in knowledge? Is it weaning you from the world? Do you find this to be your experience, that when you receive any practical truth into your minds you love it, and love to feel its application to yourself, and take pleasure in practising it?

If you are not growing in grace, becoming more and more holy, yielding yourselves up to the influence

of the gospel, you are deceiving yourselves. How is it now with you who are elders of this church? How is it with you who are heads of families—all of you? When you hear a sermon, do you seize hold of it and take it home to you, and practise it? Or do you receive it into your minds, and approve of it, and never practise it? Woe to that man who admits the truth, and yet turns away and does not practise it, like the man beholding his natural face in a glass turning away and forgetting what manner of man he was.

Conclusion

Did you notice Finney said saving faith (belief) had to have a definite content? He said:

Let a sinner turn from his sins altogether, and suppose his works to be as perfect as he thinks them to be, and yet he could not be pardoned without faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ.

His point remains just as valid today as it was back then. Nobody will be saved unless they believe Jesus Christ died for their sins. That is an essential part of the *content* of saving faith. In these Last Days, however, saving faith must, because of events that are only now beginning to occur, contain a great deal more than that rudimentary little precept if it is to carry the Believer through to the End. Therefore, the Truth one needs to know in order to see through Satan’s grand delusion will eventually be available to all. But it may well be available too late to be of any benefit to the vast majority.

There is an incredible store of information that lies hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Church once had knowledge of that information in its possession but lost it. (See “The Protestant Confession: The Church Lost The Teaching,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, January 1992 and “Did You Mean That Literally?” and “The Origen of Folly,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, January 1993.) Fools who have no “love of the truth” will deny that could ever be the case, that God would ever allow it. It is true nonetheless. Contrary to what some would like to believe, the Truth doesn’t become a lie just because fools prefer to believe whatever “conventional wisdom” they find embodied in their particular religious tradition. It only becomes hidden from the sight of those dumb enough to pay any attention at all to

fools. Finney hit the nail right on the head when he said this about the relationship that exists between Truth and salvation:

Two things are indispensable to evangelical, or saving faith. The first is, intellectual conviction of the truth of a thing. And here I do not mean merely the abstract truth of a thing, but in its bearing on you. The truth, in its relation to you, or its bearing on your conduct, must be received intellectually. And then true faith includes a corresponding state of the heart. This always enters into the essence of true faith. When a man's understanding is convinced, and he admits the truth in its relation to himself, then there must be a hearty approbation of it in its bearing or relation to himself. Both these states of mind are indispensable to true faith. Intellectual conviction of the truth is not saving faith. But intellectual conviction, when accompanied with a corresponding state of the affections, is saving faith. Hence it follows that where there is true saving faith, there is always corresponding conduct.

Finney can easily be excused for his ignorance concerning the true meaning of the term *heart* as it is used in the Scriptures. He was a man of his time, and his time came some fifteen or sixteen centuries after Satan stole that fundamental concept from the "hearts" of Christian leaders. The sense he has attached to the term does not negate the Truth of what he has stated, however. Only a fool bent on hiding in his or her own ignorance would argue that one does not act in accordance with what one believes. I've made that statement so many times in these pages that I've long since lost track of when and where. I will undoubtedly make it countless times to come because it is an essential verity without which one cannot understand the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching*. People *always* act in accordance with what they believe is true.

The truth of the matter is, you can readily determine who is and who is not a True Believer just by watching their actions and listening to what they say. If their mouth doesn't tell you outright what they believe, their actions will. That's not just an opinion. It's the Truth. But if it needs any confirmation, Finney said exactly the same thing:

Here is the source of a grand delusion among men in regard to religion. They see it to be true, and they really

rejoice in contemplating it; they do not enter into its relation to themselves, and so they love to hear such preaching, and say they are fed by it. But mark! They go away and do not practise.

Did you hear what he said about "a grand delusion"? He is *talking about* the circumstance in which someone firmly believes something other than the Truth to be true. People choose to do that for all sorts of reasons. But the primary reason a person chooses to believe a lie is because it provides some sort of mental comfort while they go on doing what they know they shouldn't do. That is normally called "rationalization." Call it what you will, it will eventually be shown to be what it is—stupidity.

Finney knew all about the mind games that people play in order not to face the Truth head on. That's why it would not surprise me to find that, hidden somewhere in his writings, he has made a direct reference to the delusion of Pretenders in connection with the following passage of Scripture:

Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains {will do so} until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; {that is,} the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

(2 Thessalonians 2:5–12)

Paul made an absolutely awesome statement in that passage, didn't he? He said a whole lot of folks are going to be taken completely by surprise after they have chosen to believe the deception whereby Satan comes to power as the Antichrist. But how would they ever know that what they have chosen to believe is a lie? Paul said "God will send upon them a deluding

influence so that they might believe what is false." So if you have already chosen to believe part of the lie that is going to allow the Antichrist to come to power, how would you know whether or not what I'm saying is true? Every last one of you who reads what I am writing here thinks God would never let something like that happen to you. That's the phenomenal thing about the delusion God is sending on this generation. If you do not "receive a love of the truth," you'll never know that you don't know the Truth until it is too late for you to rectify your error.

You see, folks, there is only one thing that prevents the Church of the *Living* God from being what God requires it to be before the Return of Jesus Christ. That is the vast crowd of Pretenders sitting in the pews alongside True Believers every Sunday. You know the ones I *mean*—those obstreperous individuals who clamor to be identified as Children of God, but obviously aren't. That particular situation is nothing new. It's been that way for more than eighteen hundred years. But God intends to correct that unfortunate situation before the End. You don't believe that? Wait and see.

The one thing that distinguishes our generation from earlier generations is the thick haze of delusion that prevents True Believers from seeing Pretenders for the frauds they are. The haze was not so thick in Finney's day. He and most other evangelical leaders still understood a simple Truth that leaders in our own day have chosen to ignore:

And I am more and more persuaded, that great multitudes are to be found in all our congregations, where the abstract doctrines of the gospel are much preached, who like the preaching and like to hear about God, and all these things, and yet are unconverted.

That is nothing more or less than what I have been telling you for nigh on five years. You had best believe it. It is true, in spite of the fact that deluded "Christians" all around you will vehemently deny it. Why wouldn't they? They have a personal interest in not being found out as Pretenders.

Finney's preaching had a powerful impact on saint and sinner alike in his day because it helped people see right through their own pretense and that of other Pretenders in the Church. That simple fact offers hope to some of you who read what I write.

Through my ministry you are going to be able to see the Truth for what it is as well. As Finney put it:

The truth is, those who do not obey God are not Christians. The contrary doctrine is ruinous to the churches, by filling them up with multitudes whose claim to piety depends on their adoption of certain notions, while they never heartily intended to obey the requirements of the gospel in their lives.

That sounds a lot like what I've been saying repeatedly over the last few years, doesn't it? The sad fact is, what Finney wrote well over a century ago is just as true today as it was back then. Pretenders in his day were no different than those in our own. He knew that Pretenders love to go to church, listen to the sermon, sing in the choir, even teach a Sunday School class, all the while believing a lie of Satan that tells them they are going to Heaven when they die.

However, Finney knew, as do I, that belief in a lie doesn't make a bit of difference as far as God is concerned. If you have not been born again, God doesn't know you. And as I've told you before, belief in the Truth is the only thing that will save you. That's why Paul wrote what he did about all those Pretenders who are going to choose to believe Satan's delusion in our own day:

... God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.
(2 Thessalonians 2:11b-12)

Belief in a lie has never saved anyone. Yet the multitudes in the churches today go on believing they will be saved just because they choose to believe they will be saved. Ultimately, they are only deceiving themselves. Those of you who are True Believers are eventually going to come to the realization that what I am saying is true. You can believe that if you care to. You can disbelieve it if you dare to. It is true nonetheless. Truth is truth; lies are a dime a dozen. Only a fool would argue that something is true just because he wants it to be. That's where Finney's explanation of the situation is instructive. He knew that some religious folks are a bit more devious than others:

There are two classes of hypocrites among professors of religion, those that deceive others and those that deceive themselves. One class of hypocrites are those that, under a specious outside of morality and religion, cover up the enmity of their hearts against God, and lead others to think they are very pious people.... The other class is that referred to in the text, who do not deceive others but themselves. These are orthodox in sentiment, but loose in practice. They seem to suppose religion to consist in a parcel of notions, without regard to practice, and thus deceive themselves by thinking they are good Christians while destitute of true holiness. They are hearers of the word but not doers.

The most destitute of the two types of deluded individuals he mentions is the latter. These poor dupes have not the slightest doubt that they stand in God's favor. Yet all they have to go on is an emotional attachment to some figment of their own imagination. They should be able to see the Truth for what it is, if for no other reason than the fact that their life in no way lines up with the standard they find presented in the Scriptures. They can't see the Truth, however, because they have chosen to firmly believe the lie that tells them all is well with their soul. Finney understood their situation perfectly. Their delusion rests on nothing more than an emotional fiction:

Many suppose they are Christians from the emotions they feel in view of the truth, when in fact what they receive is truth presented to their minds in such a way that they do not see its bearing on themselves. If you bring the truth so to bear on them, as to destroy their pride and cut them off from their worldliness, such professors resist it.

Do they ever! Try this experiment: Tell one of these religious imbeciles the Truth and see if they don't get hot in a hurry. You want to know why the Truth makes them angry? Because they have a vested interest in not knowing the Truth. You see, the lies they believe allow them to do whatever they want to do and still believe that God accepts them as they are. The Truth is not quite so open to personal interpretation. Keep that in mind if you decide to share what I write with others. It might help you avoid the wrath of one of those good "Christians" out there who thinks it is all right to preach love and practice hatred.

The only difference between our day and Finney's is the sheer number of Pretenders who claim to be "Christians." That situation arises from the Pretenders' definition of who is, and who is not, a "Christian." I prefer a narrower definition in which the only legitimate "Christians" are those who have repented and been born again. After all, those are the only ones that God accepts. Yet I dare say that nine out of ten people attending fundamental/evangelical churches today have never been born again. Most of them probably think they have had that all-essential personal experience with God, but they will discover too late that a lifetime of thinking won't buy them a good cold cup of water in Hell.

The God of wrath that Finney preached is currently crafting a specific set of circumstances that will bring this present era to a stunning, horrifying conclusion. You can believe that if you care to. You can disbelieve it if you dare to. I don't really care one way or the other because I'm just doing what God called me to do. So you go ahead and live your life any way you want to; I'll live mine the only way I know how. Then we'll both see whose view of the Truth is vindicated after we're pushing up daisies. I'm game if you are.

You see, the God of wrath has endured the stupidity of fools for just about as long as He intends to. Take a good look around you. If you have any ability at all to see with the "eyes of your heart," you should be able to see that lies and liars control this realm through the creation of a climate of uncertainty. But that is only because fools learn early on that lying allows them to do whatever they want and get away with it. Unfortunately, the "get away with it" part of their philosophy is just an illusion.

The Truth is, everybody dies, yet nobody knows anything at all about the Hell that awaits them on the other side. They've just heard "rumors," and perhaps read the *parabolic* description they can find in the Scriptures, which they choose not to believe. Charles Finney told his generation all about the Hell that awaits the fool who chooses not to believe the Truth. That was because he had experienced a personal encounter with the same God of wrath that I know. Some of you who read what I write have had a similar experience. To you I have but one word: Now is the time for you to drop the pretense you learned from the Pretenders all around you and get back to the basics you understood when you first believed. ■



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: In the last issue you provided a transcript of a conversation you had with Mike Clay, in which he related the various things he went through until he was finally able to repent and believe the Truth of the Gospel last December. It seems remarkable to me that he could listen to the things you have been teaching over the years and never realize that he had not been born again. Why do you think that was possible?

Elijah: A lot of the responsibility for that lies with me. First of all, I do not claim to be called as an Evangelist. I claim that God called me as a Teacher. The difference between those two offices, however, lies in the degree of authority the office carries with it. The Evangelist has the authority to preach only those things that are necessary to usher new Believers into the Kingdom of God. Consequently, that office carries no authority whatsoever for teaching new Believers the things necessary for them to mature in Christ. The office of Teacher does.

While my authority as a Teacher includes the authority to teach the same things that an Evangelist would preach to sinners, the purpose of my calling differs greatly. I have been called to *teach* the things necessary for Believers to mature in Christ. I have not been called to *preach the Gospel* so that sinners might be saved. While that might seem to be splitting hairs to some, it makes a vast difference in the way I view

what God has called me to do. An Evangelist who has been called of God seeks to address, and therefore assumes he is addressing, sinners. A Teacher who has been called of God seeks to address only those who have responded to the message of an Evangelist who has been called of God.

Until seven or eight years ago, I was naïve enough to take the word of liars as the gospel Truth. I assumed anyone who said they were a “Christian” had actually been born again. I thought they all must have had a personal experience with the same God that I knew, the same God Who called me to teach. I have gradually been able to see through the fog that prevents all True Believers today from seeing the same Truth that earlier generations of Christians readily understood: A person has not necessarily been born again just because he or she says that he or she has been. That little bit of insight is incredibly important to anyone who wants to know the Truth. It can go a long way toward providing freedom from Satan’s delusion.

I learned the hard way that what people say is not necessarily true. That’s why I *talk* a lot *about* True Believers and Pretenders in the things I write for your newsletter. There are True Believers out there, and I dare say all of them are in the same sad state I was in. They think most people who go to church are going for the same reason they go to church.

As far as Mike’s situation was concerned, he started listening to my teaching back when I was so foggy-headed as to believe that anyone who was willing to listen to me must, by definition, be one of those whom God had called me to teach. I have gradually, over the past few years, come to realize just how ridiculous that notion actually is. Why would God call me to teach someone things that are intended to bring them to full maturity in Jesus Christ when they have never been a member of the Body of Jesus Christ in the first place? I saw just how futile that exercise can be over the years that I taught Mike. He never once responded to my teaching in the way that I understood a True Believer would respond. Yet I went on teaching him. So you can see that his ignorance was totally eclipsed by my own.

Editor: On the subject of ignorance ..., You display what many people would call an “arrogance” in many of the things you write, especially when you mention

“idiots” and “fools.” Knowing you personally, I know that you are especially aware of your own ignorance and don’t approach people that way on a personal level. Why do you write that way? Also, in that same vein, I noticed you only started doing that a year or so ago. What prompted you to start?

Elijah: That all started in November of ’93. I was in the process of writing commentary on the piece of Early Christian literature called “The Epistle of Barnabas.” (Editor: See “Given the Opportunity, the Fool Will Play the Fool,” *The Voice of Elijah® Update*, December 1993.) The more I read the nonsense that the author of that work had written, the more I realized he was the proverbial fool that the writer of the Book of Proverbs *talks about*. So I began to describe him that way.

After I began to use derisive terminology, it became a challenge to see how many different synonyms I could use in that article to put your readers on notice that I could see through the superficial goofiness that masquerades as “Christianity” today. Those who have an editorial bent have probably already noticed I have a decided preference for the word *goofy* and the phrase *theological goofiness*. To my mind they accurately reflect what is being palmed off to the unsuspecting as the Truth of Christianity today. I still have the list of words that I drew up while writing that article. It’s around here somewhere. Would you like to see it?

Editor: Sure.

Elijah: It should be right here under these papers. I keep it handy just so I don’t have to go through the process again when I get worked up about something ridiculous. However, this list is actually just a first draft. It only contains the words I used in that first article, so it needs to be updated.

Editor: I see two lists here. You have a short list of adjectives:

*absurd
ridiculous
stupid*

Then you have a fairly long list of nouns:

*idiot
moron
dolt
numskull
dullard
ignoramus
dunce
simpleton
clown
blockhead
feeble-minded
bonehead
dumbbell
pedant
feeble-wit
lamebrain*

You’re right. Your list does need to be updated. There are a lot more words than these that you could use to describe the person you have in mind. Okay. That explains why you started, but you haven’t told me why you continue to ridicule.

Elijah: Earlier, I mentioned the fog that kept me from seeing what Charles Finney and many other evangelical leaders in his generation accepted as a matter of fact: that conservative churches are just as filled with Pretenders as the liberal churches. That specific lack of insight on my part is only the tip of an iceberg as far as I am concerned. I am constantly amazed when I can suddenly see the Truth related to something I believed to be true just because it was part of the “Christian” mind-set I found in the Church.

Editor: You are talking about things related to the meaning of Scripture?

Elijah: That’s part of it, and I suppose everything ultimately goes back to an accurate understanding of the message of the Scriptures. But there are things other than abstract theological concepts that I have gradually come to understand as well. There are a lot of the things related to practical “Christian” living that I can see clearly today, yet I couldn’t see any of them just a few years ago.

Editor: Can you give me an example?

Elijah: Well, you asked me why I continued to use the derisive terminology we've been *talking about*. The reason I do that relates to my insight into what it actually *means* to be a Christian. I was amazed to read a few years ago that Polycarp, the Early Church leader who was evidently a disciple of the Apostle John and in turn taught Irenæus, refused to have anything to do with the heretic Marcion. Not only would he not remain under the same roof with the man, he refused to greet him in a civil manner when they met in public. He did that because Marcion was a Pretender. The orthodox Church had already excommunicated him and he had established a separate "church" in Rome, yet he wanted Polycarp to accept him as a "brother." Polycarp made a point out of refusing to have anything to do with him.

Seeing how Polycarp responded to Marcion opened my eyes to the fact that the goofy notion that is prevalent in the Church today concerning what it *means* to be a "Christian" is completely warped. It is nothing more than another part of Satan's delusion. Being a Christian has nothing to do with the artificial "be nice to everyone" philosophy that pervades the Church today. As far as God is concerned, a Christian is defined by *what they believe* rather than *what they do*. Being able to see that, I also saw that the only way I could awaken others was to start making a point of it in the same way that Polycarp did with Marcion.

I have nothing against those who preach the traditional lunacy you find taught in the Church today. They don't know they are Satan's agents. The reason they don't know is because Church leaders lost the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching* some eighteen hundred years ago. [Editor: See "The Protestant Confession: The Church Lost *The Teaching*," *The Voice of Elijah*®, January 1992.] Consequently, religious leaders today have not the slightest inkling that the wrath of God burns against them for teaching the lamebrained things they are teaching. Unfortunately, they will refuse to believe the Truth when the Truth is once again available. Therefore, they will be just as guilty as the dolts who turned away from the Truth in the first place. If I can help even one person begin to look logically at what Satan is doing in the Church today, I will have accomplished my purpose in ridiculing the fools who go on blindly leading the blind. That's all I'm trying to do—open the eyes of the blind.

Editor: My next question ties in rather well with what you just said about opening the eyes of the blind. I have several questions from a reader who has gradually come to understand the Truth concerning what Satan is trying to accomplish in the Church today. He writes:

Sometimes when I hear individuals or organizations that have power of influence (like politicians, news media types, lobbying groups, advertisers, scientists, professors, preachers, and other so-called experts and scholars) covering up the truth, or telling flat-out lies so as to deceive others and protect their own agenda, I often feel myself getting angry within. Usually, that anger does not manifest itself outwardly, but I do admit that sometimes I burn within when I know that I have clearly heard a lie. The question I have is whether it's possible to have this type of anger and still live righteously before God? Using Jesus as my example, I can see that righteous anger has a place in true Christianity.

— *But where is the line that separates righteous anger from unrighteous anger?*

— *What are the distinguishing characteristics of righteous anger?*

— *What are the distinguishing characteristics associated with unrighteous anger?*

— *Doesn't personal selfishness have a lot to do with most forms of unrighteous anger?*

Elijah: Anger is an interesting emotion, if for no other reason than the fact that it is one of the most basic emotions that we have. Fear is the most basic emotion. However, fear stems from a defensive response to some perceived threat. Anger is a bit more complex in its expression. But it still has only one ultimate motivation. Anger always stems from a desire of one kind or the other. If that desire has validity in the sight of God, the anger is righteous. If the desire has no validity in the sight of God, the resulting anger is unrighteous. I teach people to avoid desires of any kind, whether valid or invalid. My reason goes to the heart of what Paul had in mind when he wrote this:

BE ANGRY, AND {yet} DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.

(Ephesians 4:26–27)

Anger is a legitimate emotion, just as there are legitimate desires. But Satan can easily twist any desire so that it becomes an illegitimate desire. For that reason anger should always be a sign to the True Believer that Satan has available to him an excellent opportunity to gain control.

If you look at anger from the perspective of its origin in desire of one kind or the other, you can see the fine line that separates righteous anger from unrighteous anger. Righteous anger stems from a legitimate desire to have circumstances other than what they are. Unrighteous anger stems from an illegitimate desire to have circumstances other than what they are. Neither of these two types of anger is, in and of itself, where the real problem lies. The problem lies in the fact that, because anger stems from a desire to have circumstances other than what they are, it can easily result in overt actions that seek to *make* circumstances other than what they are.

The New Testament has a word for anger that manifests itself in outward activity designed to change circumstances. It is called “wrath.” The Greek term for “wrath” is used thirty-some times in the New Testament, most often with reference to the wrath of God poured out on unbelievers alive at the Return of Jesus Christ. That “wrath” will completely change the desperate circumstances in which we now find ourselves. Unfortunately, translators often fail to *make* a clear *distinction between* the specific term for “wrath” and the generic term for “anger.” That’s why it isn’t easy to see that the term *wrath* is used to refer to the anger of Jesus Christ that prompted Him to take action in healing an individual [Editor: See Mark 3:5] and that it is also sometimes used to refer to the “wrath” of men.

Although the Apostle Paul realized that righteous anger is a legitimate emotion for True Believers, he would not agree that giving in to anger is always a wise thing for the True Believer to do. That’s why he listed both “wrath” and “anger” in Colossians and Ephesians as emotions that should be avoided. Here’s what he said to the Ephesians:

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.
(Ephesians 4:31–32)

Then he said basically the same thing in Colossians:

But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, {and} abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its {evil} practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—{a renewal} in which there is no {distinction between} Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.
(Colossians 3:8–11)

A fundamental misunderstanding concerning anger has crept into current Christian thinking because translators have not understood how the crucial distinction of overt action distinguishes anger from wrath. Also, most people don’t realize James is talking about wrath as the outward expression of anger in the well-known passage from his book:

{This} you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak {and} slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.
(James 1:19–20)

The Greek term translated “anger” in that passage is the term translated “wrath” elsewhere in the New Testament. James said what he did because the “wrath” of man cannot accomplish anything for God. As a matter of fact, True Believers are expected to refrain from doing anything that might change their personal circumstances if their activity stems from anger of any kind, whether righteous or unrighteous. That is because God fully intends to bring the full force of His wrath into play in these Last Days in order to even the score on behalf of True Believers. If the True Believer has already sought to change his or her circumstances through personal wrath, the wrath of God can no longer settle the score. That’s why the Apostle Paul said the things he said in the Book of Romans about “leaving room for God’s wrath” by remaining in subjection to authority. Listen to what he said:

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath {of God,} for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS

MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil. Wherefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

(Romans 12:19–13:5)

In the specific instance that your reader has mentioned, i.e., where leaders of one sort or another are obviously saying whatever is necessary to accomplish their own objectives, he and other True Believers need to accept that as nothing less than what is to be expected here at the End. The propagation of lies in order to discredit the Truth has not even begun. So if folks think things are bad now, they will really have difficulty dealing with the circumstances they face after Satan has put in place the delusion he has planned.

Editor: Here is another set of questions for you from that same reader:

Because of the growing perception in political circles that the "christian right" is becoming a dominant force that cannot be overlooked, and because of the rapid rise to prominence of such "christian" ministries as ... , [Editor: Named ministry deleted] there seems to be a growing perception on the part of Pretenders in the Church today that "christianity" is expanding at a rapid rate. Even ... [Editor: Named christian leader deleted] has been quoted as saying that he thinks "christianity" will explode in growth around the world in the forthcoming years.

— Do you see the false perception that "christianity"

is growing at a rapid pace in the world as a logical progression in the delusion that Satan is foisting upon the Church today?

— Do you expect "christianity" (as defined by Pretenders) to increase in popularity worldwide right up to the time of the "abomination of desolation"?

— Or do you see the "christian" religion remaining much as it is today in terms of size and popularity?

Elijah: The answer to those questions comes right out of the Scriptures. Jesus said this concerning our time:

And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what {will be} the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for {those things} must take place, but {that} is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are {merely} the beginning of birth pangs. Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come. Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; and let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! But pray that your flight may not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath; for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect

those days shall be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There {He is,}' do not believe {him.} For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance. If therefore they say to you, 'Behold, He is in the wilderness,' do not go forth, {or,} 'Behold, He is in the inner rooms,' do not believe {them.} For just as the lightning comes from the east, and flashes even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather."
(Matthew 24:3–28)

When most folks read that passage, they get so caught up in the details that they overlook the obvious. They speculate as to the wars and earthquakes, the famine and persecution, the false prophets and "abomination of desolation," the "this" and the "that," and they completely miss the point of what Jesus has said. I'll admit there are legitimate questions that come to mind when you read the passage, especially when you compare the three accounts of what Jesus said in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. But did you catch what His main concern was?

Editor: *He was telling His disciples what the signs would be at the End of the Age.*

Elijah: That's true. He was. But take a good look at how He prefaced what He said. Matthew and Mark have basically the same account:

*And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am {He!}' and will mislead many."
(Mark 13:5–6)*

Luke has recorded the account a little differently in order to fit in with the purpose he had in writing, but he tells us Jesus said essentially the same thing:

*And He said, "See to it that you be not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, 'I am {He,}' and, 'The time is at hand'; do not go after them."
(Luke 21:8)*

You can easily see the central thrust of what Jesus said to His disciples on this occasion if you just pull

together several verses out of Matthew 24 that tie the passage together:

*And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many."
(Matthew 24:4–5)*

*"And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved."
(Matthew 24:10–13)*

*"Then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'There {He is,}' do not believe {him.} For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you in advance."
(Matthew 24:23–25)*

There can be little doubt that His concern was that those who know the Truth must understand they will stand exposed to believing a lie shortly before He returns. Now take a look at the same verses from the parallel passage in Mark:

*And Jesus began to say to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. Many will come in My name, saying, 'I am {He!}' and will mislead many."
(Mark 13:5–6)*

*"And then if anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ'; or, 'Behold, {He is} there'; do not believe {him;} for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, if possible, to lead the elect astray. But take heed; behold, I have told you everything in advance."
(Mark 13:21–23)*

The only difference in the two accounts is Matthew has an extra mention of false prophets arising to "mislead many." By contrast, the account in the Gospel of Luke includes only the introductory warning against

being misled by those who come claiming to be Jesus Christ at His Return.

These accounts tell us that Jesus' disciples asked Him about His Second Coming and He warned them that most Believers will be enticed into believing the lie that He has already returned. He indicated that would happen in the days immediately before and after the Antichrist takes his seat in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem as the "abomination of desolation." He mentioned that particular false belief because He knew that, when the Antichrist appears, he will mislead Believers by claiming to be Jesus Christ Himself. [Editor: See *The AntiChrist*, *The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist*, and *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1992.] That's the same reason Paul wrote what he did to the Thessalonians about the appearance of the Antichrist:

*Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for {it will not come} unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?
(2 Thessalonians 2:1-5)*

The point Paul seeks to make in this passage is exactly the same one Jesus made in Matthew 24. Christians should not even consider the possibility that Jesus Christ has returned until after they see the Antichrist sitting in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem. Then they should, as Jesus indicated, hurriedly take whatever steps they can to avoid the persecution that will immediately precede the Second Coming.

Jesus and Paul were obviously concerned that those who know the Truth would be "misled" by someone claiming to be Jesus Christ at His Second Coming. They knew the Antichrist will eventually appear, doing just that. [Editor: See "That's Why He's Called AntiChrist!" *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1992.] Irenæus and Hippolytus have already told us what

the Early Church understood would happen. [Editor: See *The AntiChrist* and *The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist*.] The Antichrist will sit in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem as "the abomination of desolation" after having convinced most Christians that he actually is Jesus Christ. That is undoubtedly the "apostasy" that Paul mentions in connection with the appearance of the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

The only question that remains to be answered is, "How do we get from here to there?" I could list several things that I see happening in the Church today that will "mislead many" into accepting the Antichrist. But I have no intention of explaining all those things at this time. Everything has a time, and the time for all that is not now. If people want to believe the goofy things they hear taught in the Church today, let them. I can't be bothered by refuting the logic of fools. I am going to continue building a solid foundation for the beliefs of "The Many" who respond to my teaching and thereby "gain insight" in these Last Days. [Editor: He is alluding to what Daniel says in Daniel 12.]

The "easy-believism" nonsense that masquerades as Christianity today is obviously an essential part of Satan's plan. So, too, are those doctrines that claim Jesus Christ will rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem after He returns. Those things will not only "mislead many" so that "the love of many will grow cold," they will also ensure that most "Christians" will firmly believe the Antichrist is Jesus Christ.

However, erroneous Christian beliefs concerning the Return of Jesus Christ are only part of the equation. Most "Christians" know the Jews are expecting the Messiah. Few are aware that Shi'ite Muslims also have messianic expectations. Islamic fundamentalists are Shi'ite. Therefore, you need to keep a close eye on the spread of Islamic fundamentalism. Then you should monitor the expected "conversion" of the Jews to Christianity. Messianic Jewish churches are currently establishing links between Christians and Jews. Satan will probably use their efforts to blend Jewish and Christian expectations concerning the messiah. Those things are all going to be important to his delusion. I have no idea how, when, or where the expectations of these three major religions will converge to bring the Antichrist to power, but they will. And morons will either vehemently deny or want to debate everything I have just said. ■

We now also understand how Hippolytus came to know (chap. vi.) that “in the circumcision the Saviour came into the world, and he [Antichrist] in like manner shall come.” It also becomes clear how the idea occurred to Victorinus of speaking of Nero in such language as this: “Him therefore God having raised up shall send as a king worthy to the worthy [of such], and as a Christ such as the Jews deserved.... And since he shall bring another name, he shall likewise institute another life, so that him the Jews may receive as Christ, [for] saith Daniel (xi. 37), ‘Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women,’ he who heretofore had been most foul, for no one shall be able to seduce the people of circumcision unless [he be himself] a defender of the law.” So universal is the unanimity on this point that it will suffice to adduce one more witness, Jerome on Daniel xi. 21: “But our [expositors] interpret both better and more correctly that at the end of the world these things shall be done by the Antichrist, who is to rise up from a small nation—that is, the nation of the Jews.” ...

Still more clearly and distinctly is now seen the whole aspect of that apocalyptic tradition: an Antichrist is expected, but not from the Roman empire, which, on the contrary, is the power that still bars the way to the appearance of the Antichrist. Hence the godless power, a false Messiah who claims divine worship, arises in Jerusalem in the midst of Israel itself.

M. Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1896), pp. 133–135

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