

Charles G. Finney:

TO THE CONVERTS OF THE GREAT REVIVALS THAT HAVE PREVAILED IN THE UNITED STATES, WITHIN THE FEW LAST YEARS.

[#2]

Beloved--I closed my last letter, by adverting to the fact, that several professedly religious periodicals have so referred to what I had said, in regard to your being "a disgrace to religion," as virtually to represent me, as denying the reality, genuineness, and power of those glorious revivals, in which you were converted. I denied having said any thing, in that connexion to that effect. But I did assert in my Lecture, and re-assert in my last letter, that I believed many of you were, by your lives, a disgrace to the religion of Jesus Christ. Now, beloved, I said not this, nor do I now say it to bring a railing accusation against you. But for the purpose of preparing the way to put some questions home to your conscience--with the design to turn your eyes fully upon your own life, and spirit, as exhibited before the world.

And here let me say, that when you received this number, I desire each of you, to consider this letter as directed to you individually--as a private letter to you, although communicated through this public channel.

I will write it upon my knees; and I beg of you to read it upon your knees. And when you have read it as written to yourself, and received it, as I conjure you to do, as a private communication to you, from me, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I entreat you to hand it to all your Christian friends, in your neighborhood, and within your reach, beseeching them to receive it, and consider it as a private letter to them, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hereafter, should the providence of God permit, I may more particularly address different classes of individuals, than I can in this letter. I intend to address fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children, ministers, church officers, editors of religious papers, young men, and young women, as so many distinct classes of individuals, to whom particular truths are applicable.

In this, I address you without reference to your age, or sex, or station, or calling, simply as a professor of the religion of Jesus Christ. I have said, that I fear and believe, that many of you, at least, are a disgrace to the religion you profess.

By this I mean, that, instead of fairly, and truly representing the religion of Christ, in your life and spirit, you, in many respects, grossly misrepresent it.

Do not here suffer your temper to rise, and turn upon me and say, "Physician heal thyself." I might, to be sure, confess my own sins; but my business now, as an "ambassador of Jesus Christ," is with your conscience.

And now, dearly beloved, bear with me, while I put the questions home to you, as by name.

Are not your life, and spirit, and habits a miserable misrepresentation of the religion you profess?

You are a professor of the religion of Jesus Christ. Your profession of religion has placed you on high, as "a city that cannot be hid." You are not hid. The eyes of God, of Christians, of the world, of hell are upon you.

And now, precious soul, do you sincerely believe that you feel, and act, and live, and do, as the Lord Jesus Christ would, under similar circumstances?

Are those around you forced, by your life and spirit, to recognize the lineaments divine of the character of Christ in you?

Would those that know nothing of Christ be able to catch, and understand the true spirit and meaning of the religion of Jesus, by an acquaintance with you?

Would they obtain from your life and example, such an idea of the nature, design, and tendency of the gospel, as would lead them to value it--to understand its necessity and importance?

Are your spirit, and temper, and conversation so unearthly, so heavenly, so divine, so much like Christ, as fairly to represent him? or do you misrepresent him?

Is not the temper that you manifest--the life that you lead--your conversation--your pursuits,--are not all these, in many respects, the very opposite and contrast of the spirit of the religion of Christ?

My beloved brother, sister, father, mother, whoever you are, remember that while you read these questions, God's eye is pouring its searching blaze into your inmost soul.

What is your temper in your family--among your friends--in your private life--in your domestic relations--and in your public walks?

Is your conversation in heaven, or is it "earthly, sensual, devilish?"

What is the testimony of your closet? Can it bear witness to your sighs, and groans, and tears, over the wickedness and desolations of the world?

Are men, by beholding your good works, constrained to "glorify your Father who is in heaven?" Or is the name of God blasphemed, on account of your earthly and unchristian life and spirit?

Can those that remain unconverted, in the place where you live, bear witness that a great and divine change was wrought in you by the Spirit of God?

I beseech you, in the name of Christ, to inquire, are your impenitent acquaintances constrained to confess, that that must have been a work of God, that could have wrought so great a change in you, as they daily witness?

Do you think that the interests of religion are really advanced by your life, and that you are continually making an impression, in favor of holiness, on those around you?

Do they witness in you the "peace of God that passeth understanding?"

Do they behold, in you, that sweet and divine complacency in the will and ways of God, that spreads a heavenly serenity, and calm, and sweetness over your mind, in the midst of the trials, and vicissitudes, to which you are subjected?

Or do they behold you vexed, anxious, careful, easily disturbed, and exhibiting the spirit of the world? My dear soul, if this is so, you are a horrible disgrace to religion--you are unlike Jesus. Was this the spirit that Jesus manifested?

Let me inquire again: what are you doing for the conversion of sinners around you; and what for the conversion of the world?

Would one hundred million such Christians as you are, and living just as you live, be instrumental in converting the world?

Suppose there are a thousand million of men upon the earth; and suppose that one hundred million of these were just such Christians as you are, in your present state, and at your present rate of usefulness--when would the world be converted?

Is the Church, and the world, better and holier, on account of your profession? And are they really benefited by your life?

If not, your profession is a libel upon the Christian religion. You are, like Peter, denying your Savior; and like Judas, you have kissed, but to betray him.

Now, beloved, I will not take it upon me to decide these questions, that I have put to you on my knees, and in the spirit of love. Will you be honest, and, on your knees, spread out this letter, to God your Maker, and Christ your Savior?

Will you not, upon your knees, read over these questions, one by one, and ask God to show you the true state

of your life, as it relates to each one of them?

And here, beloved, I leave you, for the present; and may the Savior aid you, and make you honest, in meeting cordially, and answering honestly, these questions. You must be searched and humbled, and broken down in heart, before you can be built up and made strong in Christ.

Do be honest, and in haste, and address yourself to the work of self-examination, without delay. I beg of you to prepare yourself to receive the consolations of the gospel of Christ; for my soul is panting to spread them out before you.

Providence permitting, you may expect to hear from me again soon.

C.G. FINNEY,

A Servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.