

Outside the Camp

So let us go forth to Him outside the camp bearing His reproach. (Heb. 13:13 LITV)

Vol. 12, No. 3

September 2008

THE PRIDE AND DECEPTION OF EXPERIENCE-BASED RELIGION

The preacher is in the middle of a sermon on indwelling sin. "I'm just a poor, depraved sinner," he says. "My heart is desperately wicked, my flesh is in rebellion to God, and I continually struggle with my old totally depraved nature that hates God and wants self on the throne and wants salvation to be conditioned on my works. I'm self-righteous to the core of my being, and without the mercy of God, I'd be headed for hell."

The audience nods in approval. Many close their eyes and some cry as they contemplate their own wickedness. After the sermon, there is a conversation about their thankfulness that they have a preacher who is such a humble man of God. Although they don't say it out loud, they say to themselves that they, too, are humble, because they realize that they, too, are totally depraved.

It is a scenario that is played out week after week, year after year, to some degree or another, in assemblies all over the world.

Among these are those who call themselves "experiential Calvinists" (or "experimental Calvinists"). They love to read the experiences of those who have gone before, especially those "low times" in which these people have a special "feeling" of their total depravity and the wickedness of their hearts before they "look again to Jesus" (usually through an emotional reaction to something such as a sermon) and then have a special "feeling" of elation for a time because of their "feeling" of a special "closeness to Christ." This "feeling" eventually fades as the "cares of the world" and "the total depravity of the heart" once again take over, and the roller-coaster ride starts again. This is seen as true humility and holiness, the true experience of every true saint.

For example, here is what we find in an article entitled "The Lord's Dealings With Paul Avril" that was republished in an experiential Calvinist magazine:

"On Friday morning, November 24th, 1775, as I was reading in my bedroom, and praying over the Bible as usual, as I was reading and pondering over Revelation chapter 21, I had an amazing sight of

the freeness of the grace of Christ from the verses 5,6 & 7; also from chapter 22, verses 16 & 17. ...

"I was frequently visited with the above passages for many days before, and others like them. They were as honey to my palate. Such were sweet portions of Scripture to my soul ...

"But after two or three weeks I began to have some fears that it was perhaps a delusion, that it might be the effects of imagination. These suspicions gave me much uneasiness, trouble, and anguish of soul; but I was enabled to pray so much the more, and to cry louder and louder, as it were, that I might know if it were real or not. ...

"On December 27th, 1775, on a Tuesday morning, I heard Mr. Romaine at the Lock Chapel ... The greatness of this Saviour shined amazingly into my understanding, particularly when he quoted in his sermon Rom. 9 verse 5 ...

"I was here again most sweetly enabled to cast my soul into the arms of Christ and to find his promised rest, in the pardoning love of God, through atoning blood (Heb. 9:14,15; with 1 Jn. 1:7).

"These words Mr. Romaine spake from the Word of God, and others I do not now recollect. O how did my heart burn within me while Christ, by the mouth of the minister, talked with me and opened to me the Scriptures (cf. Luke 24:32). I was set more at liberty, I think, now than before, into the glorious liberty of the children of God; or, rather, I had a stronger manifestation. This is a sermon much remembered by me. ...

"For the first two months of this year, 1781, I enjoyed great and sweet manifestations of my Redeemer's love to my soul, but though then I was on the mount, yet at the beginning of March I was brought into the valley of humiliation, for I was sadly beset with my inward corruptions. They were very violent and strong, especially my stubborn besetting sin, which was ready to break out outwardly ... These inward temptations cause me to see, more and more, in the light of the Holy Spirit, the wickedness of my heart, and of my

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Experience

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weakness to resist any outward sin, proceeding from a filthy fountain, that I am always afraid of bringing a reproach upon the gospel by my outward conduct.

... "On Lord's Day morning, March 18th, I heard Mr. Romaine, from Titus 3:4-8. ... He observed, 'The more you believe, the more peace and love you will have. ...' ... I had sweet and precious meltings of soul under this sermon. It was a sweet, refreshing season to me.

"On Sunday evening, the 24th, [Nov. 1782] I heard Mr. Romaine on Romans 1:16. It proved the power of God unto me, as it did that day seven years [ago] for this was the anniversary of the day when my soul was set at liberty. It was not my spiritual birthday; that I look upon to be January 20th, 1771, when, being dead in trespasses and sins, without seeking I was found and unsought for by me, when the Lord first laid hold of my heart in effectual calling; but I was not set at liberty till November 1775. ...

"From the beginning of 1771, when I was first under convictions, I would sometimes go to hear legal (moral) preachers, both French and English, but found no comfort at all; on the contrary, only enough to make me quite despair. ...

"... Now if I had hearkened to the accusing devil, and my own legal temper and good or bad frames, I should have dropped my shield of faith, and got into the spirit of bondage again to fear, as I pharisaically formerly did; yea, I have much too great legality even now. I would fain go about to establish a little of my own righteousness if I could. God grant that the love of sin and of my own righteousness may be taken out of my heart, that Jesus alone may be exalted."

Oh how humble that all sounds to the spiritually deaf ear! Yet it

is full of heresy. First, it promotes the heresy that Christians remain totally depraved in their hearts, contrary to Ezekiel 36:26 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. (See the article "Is A Christian's Heart Deceitful and Desperately Wicked?" in this issue.) Second, it promotes the heresy that Christians can doubt their salvation, contrary to Hebrews 11:1 and Romans 8:16. (See the article "Faith Is Assurance" in Vol. 9, No. 3 of this newsletter.) Third, it promotes the heresy that there is a time-lapse between regeneration and being "set at liberty." (See the article "The Irrelevant Gospel" in Vol. 5, No. 2 of this newsletter.) Related to this are the "Holy Spirit conviction" and "preparationism" heresies in which the Holy Spirit graciously works in or on a person who is still unregenerate to make him "feel" the depth of his sin and depravity and give him a knowledge that he deserves hell, yet not giving him belief in salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. (A future article on "Holy Spirit Conviction" will be written in the pages of this newsletter, the Lord willing.)

As we can see, this unregenerate man, Paul Avril, was constantly going through a roller-coaster of feelings. For a period of time he feels good based on what he reads in the Bible; during the next period of time he feels bad because he has doubts as to what is reality; during the next period he feels good again because he heard an uplifting sermon; during the next period he feels bad again because of indwelling sin that caused him to see the wickedness of his heart; during the next period he feels good after another sermon in which Mr. Romaine said that the more one believes, the more peace and love he will have; and on and on he goes, up and down and up and down, basing his assurance on his feelings. He even says that he has "much too great legality even now" and that he would "fain go about to establish a little of my own righteousness

if I could." He admits that he still has a heart full of legalism and self-righteousness. Oh, how humble-sounding to his fellow feelings-oriented brothers! What he is actually admitting is that he has not been made a new creation and been given a new heart!

There are points of great pride among the experience-based religionists. One of these points is the feeling of vileness. How can feeling vile be a point of pride? In this way: They pride themselves in feeling vile and in telling others how vile they are, and they believe that if one does not feel as vile as he should feel, then that person's salvation should be questioned. They actually think they are *better off* than others who do not express their feelings of vileness to the same degree. They take *pride* in feeling more vile than the next person. (See the quote from Jonathan Edwards in the article entitled "Is A Christian's Heart Deceitful and Desperately Wicked?" in this issue.) They think that the more vile one feels he is, the more humble he is, and those who do not feel they are as vile as they need to think are "dead-letterists" and "Pharisees."

Another point of pride is in the nature of their experiences. They love to tell and read stories about their and others' experiences, and these experiences validate their spiritual state. These experiences consist of long periods of time in which the person feels like he is the lowest of the low and does not deserve salvation because he is too sinful. The more extreme the experience, the more validation they have. We hear stories about people who have cried endlessly, who have stayed up night after night, who have not eaten for long periods of time, who have contemplated suicide, etc., etc., because they were so distressed about their souls. And some stories get bizarre to the point of being mystical or charismatic, with visions and the like. Many will say that if a person has *not* had such an "experience," (either during the regeneration/conversion "process" or at some point), then his

salvation should be questioned. They take pride that they are not as those who have not had such experiences.

In this heretical scheme, belief of doctrine is secondary to experience; thus, as long as one has had an experience, then this is evidence of the Spirit's gracious work, even if the person did not believe the gospel. This is clearly seen in people who say that they remained Arminians after they were saved. To what do they point as evidence that God saved them? Many times, it is an experience involving a "conviction of sin" and a change in morality. They look back to a time when they changed from being immoral to being moral when they first believed the Arminian false gospel of universal atonement and renounced irreligion. This change is sometimes very dramatic, especially if people were formerly extremely outwardly immoral. Then, when these former Arminians "come into" Calvinism, they are not able to discount that previous experience. Thus, their experience – including an experience of being under some kind of "conviction" in which they despised themselves and their sin and knew they deserved to be punished for their sin – trumps belief in the gospel.

There is pride itself in believing that one does not deserve salvation because one is too sinful. Some even believe that doubt of one's salvation is a sign of one's salvation!

How many times have we heard about the person who just felt too sinful to pray, feeling that God would never accept his prayers because he is so filthy? That will bring out the tears of the false religionists. They will come up to him and hug him and say that they understand and that everything is okay.

Yet what self-righteous religionists call humility, God calls pride. What does this person who thinks he is too filthy to pray believe that his acceptance before God is based on? He believes that it is based on his *own righteousness*. And since he believes that he cannot come to

God because he is *unrighteous*, what does he believe will gain him acceptance before God? His *own righteousness*. What a proud, haughty man it is who would say that he believes in Jesus but who is too sinful to have access to God. Think of this: Once this person is over his depression and starts praying again, why has he begun to pray again? Because he feels that he is not so sinful anymore! He has somehow washed himself up to the point that he now can be accepted before God! Yet the Bible says this:

"For by one offering He has perfected in perpetuity the ones being sanctified. And the Holy Spirit witnesses to us also. For after having said before, This [is] the covenant which I will covenant to them after those days, says [the] Lord: Giving My Laws on their hearts, and I will write them on their minds; also [He adds], I will not at all still remember their sins and their lawlessnesses. But where remission of these [is], there [is] no longer offering concerning sins. Therefore, brothers, having confidence for the entering of the [Holy of] Holies by the blood of Jesus, which He consecrated for us, a new and living way through the veil; that is, His flesh; and [having] a Great Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, our hearts having been sprinkled from an evil conscience, and [our] body having been washed in pure water; let us hold fast the confession of the hope unyielding, for He who has promised is faithful" (Heb. 10:14-23). "Therefore, let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and we may find grace for timely help" (Heb. 4:16). "in whom we have boldness and access in confidence through His faith" (Eph. 3:12).

Upon what basis do God's people have boldness and confidence for entering the Holy of Holies and drawing near the throne of grace in full assurance? Through their own works and cleanness? No – it is through the blood of Jesus, through His faith, the Great High Priest who intercedes for His people. The false religionist sees a person who

doubts his salvation and says, "humble." God says, "proud." The false religionist sees a person who is fully assured of his salvation and says, "proud." God says, "humble." A truly humble person acknowledges and repents of his sin and says that he is not sufficient in and of himself to be accepted before God, and, at the same time, he is fully confident that he is accepted before God because of the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Christ alone:

"And we have such confidence through Christ toward God; not that we are sufficient of ourselves to reason out anything as [being] out of ourselves, but our sufficiency [is] of God" (2Co. 3:4-5).

The Puritans are the greatest examples of feelings-based navel-gazing religion. Although one of their own (Isaac Ambrose) wrote a book entitled *Looking Unto Jesus*, the grand theme of the Puritans was *Looking Unto Self*. Joel Beeke's book lauding such religion, entitled *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*, gives ample evidence of this. Just look for words like "feel," "heartfelt," "inflame," "affections," "head knowledge" vs. "heart experience," and the like. In a chapter entitled "Anthony Burgess on Assurance," Beeke writes: "Burgess acknowledged that many believers lack full assurance. Though most believers have some degree of assurance, few attain a comfortable degree of assurance. Full assurance is difficult for most believers to attain" (p. 177).

And how, according to Beeke and Burgess, does a believer "attain" assurance? "The mystical syllogism was based largely on the believer's internal exercises and progress in sanctification. It focused on the inward man ... 'Sometimes *Fear of God* is a sign, sometimes *Poverty of Spirit*, sometimes *Hungering and thirsting after Righteousness*, sometimes *Repentance*, sometimes *Love*, and sometimes *Patience*,' Burgess wrote. 'So that if a godly man can find any one of these in himself, he may conclude of his Salvation (See Page 7: Experience)

IS A CHRISTIAN'S HEART DECEITFUL AND DESPERATELY WICKED?

Quite some time ago, I was talking with a Calvinist about the heresy of Wesleyan Perfectionism. This Calvinist said, "Perfectionism denies the doctrine of Total Depravity." Although I agreed that Perfectionism is a damnable heresy, I did not understand how this heresy would deny Total Depravity (since Total Depravity is a doctrine about the unsaved, not the saved) and asked for clarification. This Calvinist told me that if a Christian can be totally sinless, then this would mean that the Christian's heart is not totally depraved.

What this Calvinist expressed turned out to be a common Calvinistic view: the first "T" in the acronym "TULIP" not only had to do with the total depravity of the unbeliever; it had to do with the total depravity of the believer! My subsequent research was an eye-opener, to say the least. I found that these Calvinists actually deny the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

The main passage of Scripture that has come up over and over again when I see Calvinists defend their heresy is Jeremiah 17:9. The most well-known wording is in the KJV: "*The heart [is] deceitful above all [things], and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (The LITV and YLT translate the Hebrew word *anash* as "incurable" rather than "desperately wicked.")

When I first found out that this passage was being used by people who claimed to know their Bibles to describe saved people, especially those who claimed to believe the doctrines of grace, I was stunned. This is actually a proof-text for the *real* doctrine of Total Depravity, showing clearly that there is nothing but wickedness and deceit in the unbeliever's heart and that the condition of the wicked person's heart is incurable. He is as able to change his heart as the Ethio-

pian is able to change his skin or the leopard is able to change his spots (Jer. 13:23). All the imagination of the thoughts of his heart are continually evil (Gen. 6:5), even from youth (Gen. 8:21). Everything he thinks, says, and does – even his kindness, morality, and religion – are dead works, evil deeds, and fruit unto death (Psa. 14:2-3; Prov. 4:19; 10:16,32; 12:5,10; 15:8,9,26,28; 21:4,10,27; Isa. 45:20; 64:6; Mat. 7:18; John 3:19-20; Rom. 1:20-32; 3:9-18; 7:5; 8:5-8; 10:2-3; 1Co.2:14; 2Co. 4:3-4; Eph. 4:18; Col. 1:21). Would anyone dare say that any of these verses are describing believers?

Yet you will read in books and hear in sermons that a believer's heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. In fact, it is seen as humility to say that one's own heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Jerry Bridges, in *The Pursuit of Holiness*, says this: "Sin is still hostile to God and cannot submit to His law (Rom. 8:7). Thus we have an implacable enemy of righteousness right in our own hearts. First of all the scripture indicates that the seat of indwelling sin is the heart (Mark 7:21-23; Gen 6:5; Luke 6:45). The Bible tells us that the heart is deceitful and unsearchable to any but God alone (Jer. 17:9). And in this unsearchable heart dwells the law of sin. Knowing that indwelling sin occupies a heart that is deceitful and unsearchable should make us extremely wary."

Notice that Bridges uses Romans 8:7 to describe sin in a believer! "*Because the mind of the flesh [is] enmity towards God; for it is not being subjected to the Law of God, for neither can it [be].*" Bridges says that believers have the mind of the flesh that is at enmity toward God and that cannot be subjected to the Law of God! But what does God the

Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul say in the two verses right before verse 7? "*For the ones that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh. And the ones according to Spirit [mind] the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh [is] death, but the mind of the Spirit [is] life and peace*" (Rom. 8:5-6). And what about the two verses right after verse 7? "*And those being in the flesh are not able to please God. But you are not in flesh, but in Spirit, since [the] Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone has not [the] Spirit of Christ, this one is not His*" (Rom. 8:8-9). The mind of the flesh is death! Those who have the mind of the flesh are enemies of God who cannot please God and who do not have the Spirit of God! What kind of warped thinking is this? Bridges twists the Scripture to his own destruction.

But that was just Jerry Bridges. You wouldn't expect to find it in a book by a preeminent Calvinist Reformed theologian, would you? This might surprise some of you, but the following is from JOHN OWEN.

HETERODOXY HALL OF SHAME

The title of Owen's treatise is "The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainers of Indwelling Sin in Believers Together with the Ways of its Working and Means of Prevention, Opened, Evinc'd, and Applied with a Resolution of Sundry Cases of Conscience Thereunto Appertaining." Owen is talking about believers here. The following is an excerpt from Chapter III, entitled "The seat or subject of the law of sin, the heart – What meant thereby – Properties of the heart as possessed by sin, unsearchable, deceitful – Whence that deceit ariseth – Improvement of these considerations":

“This is the subject, the seat, the dwelling-place of this law of sin, – the heart; as it is the entire principle of moral operations, of doing good or evil, as out of it proceed good or evil. Here dwells our enemy; this is the fort, the citadel of this tyrant, where it maintains a rebellion against God all our days. Sometimes it hath more strength, and consequently more success; sometimes less of the one and of the other; but it is always in rebellion whilst we live.

“That we may in our passage take a little view of the strength and power of sin from this seat and subject of it, we may consider one or two properties of the heart that exceedingly contribute thereunto. It is like an enemy in war, whose strength and power lie not only in his numbers and force of men or arms, but also in the unconquerable forts that he doth possess. And such is the heart to this enemy of God and our souls; as will appear from the properties of it, whereof one or two shall be mentioned. ...

“1. It is *unsearchable*: Jeremiah 17:9, 10, ‘Who can know the heart? I the Lord search it.’ ... In this unsearchable heart dwells the law of sin; and much of its security, and consequently of its strength, lies in this, that it is past our finding out. We fight with an enemy whose secret strength we cannot discover, whom we cannot follow into its retirements. Hence, oftentimes, when we are ready to think sin quite ruined, after a while we find it was but out of sight. It hath coverts and retreats in an unsearchable heart, whither we cannot pursue it. ...

“2. As it is unsearchable, so it is *deceitful*, as in the place above mentioned: ‘It is deceitful above all things,’ — incomparably so. ... Now, incomparable deceitfulness, added to unsearchableness, gives a great addition and increase of strength to the law of sin, upon the account of its seat and subject. I speak not yet of the deceitfulness of sin itself, but the deceitfulness of the heart where it is seated. Prov. xxvi. 25, ‘There are seven abominations in

the heart;’ that is, not only many, but an absolute complete number, as seven denotes. And they are such abominations as consist in deceitfulness; so the caution foregoing insinuates, ‘Trust him not:’ for it is only deceit that should make us not to trust in that degree and measure which the object is capable of.

“Now, this deceitfulness of the heart, whereby it is exceedingly advantaged in its harboring of sin, lies chiefly in these two things: —

“(1.) That it abounds in *contradictions*, so that it is not to be found and dealt withal according to any constant rule and way of procedure. ... The frame of the heart is ready to contradict itself every moment. Now you would think you had it all for such a frame, such a way; anon it is quite otherwise: so that none know what to expect from it. The rise of this is the disorder that is brought upon all its faculties by sin. ... This, I say, makes the heart deceitful above all things: it agrees not at all in itself, is not constant to itself, hath no order that it is constant unto, is under no certain conduct that is stable; but, if I may so say, hath a rotation in itself, where oftentimes the feet lead and guide the whole.

“(2.) Its deceit lies in its *full promiscuousness* upon the first appearance of things; and this also proceeds from the same principle with the former. ... Now, add this deceitfulness to the unsearchableness before mentioned, and we shall find that at least the difficulty of dealing effectually with sin in its seat and throne will be exceedingly increased. A deceiving and a deceived heart, who can deal with it? — especially considering that the heart employs all its deceits unto the service of sin, contributes them all to its furtherance. All the disorder that is in the heart, all its false promises and fair appearances, promote the interest and advantages of sin. Hence God cautions the people to look to it, lest their own hearts should entice and deceive them.

“Who can mention the treacheries and deceits that lie in the heart of man? It is not for nothing that the Holy Ghost so expresseth it, ‘It is deceitful above all things,’ — uncertain in what it doth, and false in what it promiseth. ...

Secondly, Hath it its residence in that which is *various, inconstant, deceitful* above all things? This calls for perpetual watchfulness against it. An open enemy, that deals by violence only, always gives some respite. You know where to have him and what he is doing, so as that sometimes you may sleep quietly without fear. But against adversaries that deal by deceit and treachery (which are long swords, and reach at the greatest distance) nothing will give security but perpetual watchfulness. It is impossible we should in this case be too jealous, doubtful, suspicious, or watchful. The heart hath a thousand wiles and deceits; and if we are in the least off from our watch, we may, be sure to be surprised. Hence are those reiterated commands and cautions given for watching, for being circumspect, diligent, careful, and the like. There is no living for them who have to deal with an enemy deceitful above all things, unless they persist in such a frame. ...

“‘Search me, O God, and try me.’ As if he had said, ‘It is but a little that I know of my deceitful heart, only I would be *sincere*; I would not have reserves for sin retained therein. ...’”

This is absolutely amazing. John Owen believed and taught that the heart of a believer is his enemy, is deceitful and deceived, is full of abominations, does not have a constant order or stable conduct, serves sin, promises falsehood, and has a thousand wiles and deceits, and believers should thus be doubtful and suspicious of what is in their hearts. He even said that David, at the end of Psalm 139, is telling God that “[i]t is but a little that I know of my deceitful heart”!

Here are two quotes from John (See Page 6: Heart)

Heart

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Brown of Haddington (quoted in Joel Beeke's *Puritan Reformed Spirituality*): "My life has been a kind of almost perpetual strife between God and my soul. He strives to overcome my enmity and wickedness with his mercies, and I strive to overcome his mercy with my enmity and wickedness. Astonishingly kind on his side, but worse than diabolically wicked on mine! After all, I wish and hope that he, not I, may obtain the victory at last." "I know the outrageous wickedness of my heart; such wickedness as would have provoked any but a God of infinite love to have cast me into hell."

John Brown was not even certain that God would be victorious in overcoming his diabolically wicked soul. He believed that his heart was outrageously wicked and would have provoked God's wrath if God were not a God of infinite love.

Those of us who are familiar with Reformed theology should not be surprised. One of the bedrock documents of Reformed theology, the heretical and immoral Westminster Confession of Faith, says that God sometimes leaves His children "to the corruption of their own hearts, ... to discover unto them the ... deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled." (Note that this fits right in with experience-based religion.)

And here is a quote from the Memoirs of Jonathan Edwards: "Often, since I lived in this town, I have had very affecting views of my own sinfulness and vileness: very frequently to such a degree, as to hold me in a kind of loud weeping, sometimes for a considerable time together: so that I have often been forced to shut myself up. I have had a vastly greater sense of my own wickedness, and the badness of my heart, than ever I had before my conversion. ... When others, that have come to talk with me about the soul-concerns, have expressed the sense they have had of their own

wickedness, by saying, that it seemed to them, that they were as bad as the devil himself; I thought their expressions seemed exceedingly faint and feeble, to represent my wickedness. ... When I look into my heart, and take a view of my wickedness, it looks like an abyss, infinitely deeper than hell. ... I have greatly longed of late for a broken heart, and to lie low before God; and, when I ask for humility, I cannot bear the thoughts of being no more humble than other Christians. It seems to me, that though their degrees of humility may be suitable for them, yet it would be a vile self-exaltation in me, not to be the lowest in humility of all mankind. ... And it is affecting to think, how ignorant I was, when a young Christian, of the bottomless, infinite depths of wickedness, pride, hypocrisy, and deceit, left in my heart."

This is pride at its most sickening, in the guise of humility, seeking to exalt self by being "more humble" than everyone else. This kind of pride is just what I was writing about in "The Pride and Deception of Experience-Based Religion" in this issue. And Edwards would dare say that this (supposedly) new heart that God gave him is infinitely wicked and hypocritical and deceitful.

Contrary to the pseudo-humble, pseudo-pious babbling, here is what God says about the heart of the believer: "And I will also give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give to you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments and do [them]" (Ezek. 36:26-27).

That *deceitful and incurable heart* is that *stony heart* that is *taken away* and is *replaced* by a *heart of flesh*! The Holy Spirit gives His people a NEW HEART and causes them to walk in obedience!

And not only is the heart new, EVERYTHING is new. The regenerated person is a NEW CREATION: *So that if anyone [is] in Christ, [he] is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new* (2Co. 5:17).

The *old things* include the *old heart*. It is GONE. The Holy Spirit makes a person anew! There is

a GREAT CHANGE that has taken place! To say that the heart of a believer remains deceitful and incurably wicked is to deny the transforming work of the Holy Spirit!

Does the Christian still sin? He most certainly does. Indwelling sin is still constantly with him to harass him make him do what he does not want to do, to the point of making him cry out that he is afflicted, distressed, grieved, and vexed (Rom. 7:14-24). But he even sins differently than the wicked. The sin of the wicked comes from their totally depraved hearts. The sin of believers comes from the principle of sin dwelling in them. Believers hate their sin (Rom. 7:15). They have died to sin, do not live in sin, no longer serve sin, are no longer under the dominion of sin, have been set free from sin, do not walk according to the flesh, are free from the law of sin, and are not in the flesh (Rom. 6:2,6,11,14,22;8:1,2,4,9).

This also runs contrary to those who say they that Christians are still adulterers and idolaters but are declared righteous, so they will inherit the kingdom of heaven. Some say, "We're all adulterers, but we're covered by the blood." They say that the only difference between Christians and non-Christian adulterers is that one is declared righteous and the other is not. 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, "And some [of you] WERE these things ..." One verse before this (as well as Galatians 5:21), God says that NONE of these kinds of people will inherit the kingdom of God.

In addition, it runs contrary to those who say that Christians are still self-righteous or legalists or that Christians can still believe or confess a false gospel or follow a false Christ. Scriptures such as Matthew 24:23-24, Luke 6:43-45, John 10:5, Romans 10:3, Galatians 5:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:3-17, and 2 John 9 smash these notions to bits.

Which do you believe? Has God worked a great change in you by making you a new creation with a new heart, or is your heart still vile and deceitful? One thing is for sure: if you believe that your heart is vile and deceitful, then it most certainly is. □

Experience

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and Justification” (pp. 180-181).

Burgess contrasted what he considered the evidences of true and false believers. He said that true believers are distinguished by “the Manner and Method [by which] the Spirit of God doth usually work Assurance,” which involves ‘serious Humiliation for sin, feeling the burden of it ... conflicts and doubts, and opposition of unbelief ...,’ while false believers have “no real inflaming of ‘the heart with love to God’” (p. 175).

Here we see in this heretical scheme that doubts and unbelief are actual signs of the Holy Spirit’s working! “God uses conflicts, doubts, and trials to mature the believer’s faith” (p. 187). God certainly uses conflicts and trials, but the Puritans believed that He also uses *doubts*! And if there have not been such doubts, then this is evidence that the Holy Spirit has not been working!

“[Burgess] then offered five reasons God might withhold assurance from His people: ‘First, *That hereby we may taste and see how bitter sin is. ... Secondly, Hereby God would keep us low and humble in ourselves*’ (p. 190). If God withholds assurance to keep us low and humble, what does that say about those who have full assurance?

Then there is the “inflaming of the ‘heart with love to God,’” without which there is false religion. What did the Puritans think this “inflaming” was?

“Edmund Calamy wrote, ‘A true meditation is when a man doth so meditate of Christ as to get his *heart* inflamed with the love of Christ ... He went on to say that, in order to do good meditation must enter three doors: the door of understanding, the door of the heart and affections, and the door of practical living. ... [T]he Puritans serve as mentors on how we can

use sanctified imagination. ... Such meditation will kindle our affections and love for God. ... Watson wrote, ‘... meditation is like the shining of the sun, it operates upon the affections, it warms the heart and makes it more holy. ...’ Bates said that meditating is like trying to build a fire from wet wood. Those who persevere will produce a flame. When we begin to meditate, we may first garner only a bit of smoke, then perhaps a few sparks, ‘but at last there is a flame of holy affection that goes up toward God.’ Persevere ‘till the flame doth so ascend,’ Bates said. ... Thomas White suggested, ‘considering the parts of Meditation are so many, viz. Preparation, Considerations, Affections, Resolutions, etc. and none of them are to be past [*sic*] slightly over, for Affections are not so quickly raised, nor are we to cease blowing the fire as soon as ever it beginneth to flame, until it be well kindled, half an hour [each day] may be thought to be the least for beginners, and an hour for those that are versed in this duty. ... Manton wrote, ‘Do not bridle up the free spirit by the rules of method. That which God calleth for is religion, not logic. ...’ ... Next, stir up affections ... Paul Baynes, in discussing meditations as a ‘private meanes’ [*sic*] of grace, compared it first with the power of sight to affect the heart, then with the process of conception and birth: ‘Now look as after conception, there is a travail to bring forth and a birth in due season: so when the soul by thought hath conceived, presently the affections are tickled and excited, for the affections kindle on a thought, as tinder doth, when a spark lighteth on it. The affections moved, the will is stirred and inclined.’ ... Meditation augments one’s affections. Watson called meditation ‘the bellows of the affections.’ He said, ‘Meditation hatcheth good affections, as the hen her young ones by sitting on them; we light affection at this fire of meditation’” (pp. 74-92).

Does any of this sound like a modern-day heresy? Of course it does. It is called the Charismatic Movement. It is based on feelings – “inflaming, kindling, warming, tickling, exciting, moving, stirring, fanning the flame of” the emotions. These feelings then become the basis of worship and assurance. After all, as Manton said, “That which God calleth for is religion, not logic”! That is an astounding statement if you think about it. This statement implies that true religion and logic are mutually exclusive – that the true Christian Faith is not logical! Doctrine becomes secondary or even tertiary, and those who emphasize doctrine rather than feelings are seen as teaching “dry orthodoxy” (as Beeke put it).

Beeke writes, “Even in conservative evangelical churches, head knowledge of scriptural truths is often a substitute for heart experience” (p. 151). “... Puritan preaching wooed the heart passionately. ... Puritan preachers did not just reason with the mind and confront the conscience; they appealed to the heart” (p. 159). He speaks of “heartfelt piety,” contrasting it with mere “scriptural knowledge” (vii).

This kind of language does not have its basis in Scripture but in mysticism and romanticism. The heart includes the mind or the intellect, which many call the “head.” Everyone who knows something knows it in his heart. What an unregenerate person knows, he knows in his heart. What a regenerate person knows, he knows in his heart. Read the following passages to see what the heart does: Gen. 6:5; 24:45; 27:41; Exo. 35:35; 36:2; Deut. 15:9; 1Ki. 3:9; Psa. 14:1; 15:2; 49:3; Prov. 14:10; Ecc. 7:22; Isa. 33:18; Matt. 13:15; Luke 2:19; Acts 8:22; Rom. 10:9-10; Heb. 4:12. These verses clearly show that the heart is what thinks, understands, knows, and believes, in both believers and unbelievers. To say that someone has a “head” knowledge with no “heart” knowledge is a false distinction.

(See Page 8: Experience)

Experience

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All knowledge comes from the intellect, which is included in the heart. True faith is a matter of the intellect, just as false faith is a matter of the intellect.

Do we who are true Christians meditate? Of course we do. But we do not do it to “stir up our affections” to have an emotional experience that makes us feel closer to God. That is just Puritan Charismatic superstitious pseudo-pious nonsense.

Are we who are true Christians just “believers in doctrine” with no “experience of godliness” in our daily lives? This is impossible. A true Christian – someone who has a true understanding, a true knowledge, a true belief, of gospel doctrine – will pursue godliness and live a life of obedience. There is no such straw man as a person who “believes right gospel doctrine in his head” but who “lacks godly living.” All Christians do not live in sin, do not serve sin, and do not walk according to the flesh; all Christians bear fruit unto God, serve in newness of spirit, hate sin, walk according to Spirit, are slaves of obedience to righteousness, have their fruit unto sanctification, are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and are zealous of good works (Rom. 6:2,6;7:4,6,15;8:1,4,9,16,18,22; Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14).

Are we who are true Christians emotionless or unfeeling intellectuals, or do we experience emotions? We most certainly do experience emotions. We, like David and Jeremiah, have experienced the weight of our sin, crying out to God for forgiveness. We, like Paul, have wept real tears over the horrible spiritual state of our brothers according to the flesh and have cried out about our own indwelling sin and about deliverance from the body of this death through Jesus Christ. We have experienced

times of intense joy when in fellowship with other believers or when meditating on the work of Christ, even to the point of crying. We have cried when we have meditated on the love with which Christ loves us, that He has saved us, who were guilty, defiled, hell-deserving sinners, by enduring the full fury of the wrath of the Father that we deserved. Our zeal for the purity of the house of God consumes us. When we see self-righteous religionists who come in the name of sovereign grace blaspheme our God and make Him into a liar, we are sometimes overcome with anger. Those who would accuse us of being emotionless, who would say that we have no deep sorrow for our own sin, who would say that we have no love for the lost, have not spent time with us.

But we are not “experiential religionists” who come in the name of sovereign grace but who base their hope and their assurance and their fellowship with God and their holiness of life on their emotions. We certainly do get emotional, but our emotions do not tell us or anyone else that we are saved. The “experiential religionists” will see a man crying all night on his bed over sin and say that this man must be saved, or at least undergoing “holy spirit conviction.” But we who are true believers know that the wicked can cry all night on their bed over their sin and still be just as wicked when they rise from their bed in the morning.

Display of emotion does not tell anything about a person's spiritual state in and of itself. The wicked can show outward compassion. They can have zeal and outward joy. They can be angry at the murderers and child molesters and homosexuals. They can believe that there is one God and tremble. They can be depressed over their sinful state. It matters not what emotions they have. What matters is this: what DOCTRINE do they believe? An “experiential religionist” can read the diary of a person who wrote that he felt enrapt-

ured by a particular sermon or a particular passage of Scripture and say that this is proof that this person is saved, no matter what doctrine he believes. We who are believers know that it is the DOCTRINE that tells us whether or not he is saved.

The Jews had a zeal for God (their affections were inflamed, kindled, warmed, tickled, excited, moved, stirred) but it was not according to KNOWLEDGE (Romans 10:2) – that specific doctrinal knowledge of the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel (Romans 10:3-4).

Faith is not a feeling or an emotion. It is not based on feelings or emotions. It is a belief in God's promise of salvation conditioned on the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ alone. Will this belief sometimes elicit certain emotions? Yes. But our assurance and our religion are not based on our experiences or emotions. They are based on the work of Jesus Christ alone. □

Outside the Camp

is a ministry of
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Articles with no author line
are by the editor.

If the Lord wills it,
this newsletter will be
distributed in January, May,
and September of each year.

All materials are always
free for the asking.

To God ALONE be the glory.