

## Discerning New Light

By Mark Finley

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1. *The Word of God does not give license for one man to set up his judgment in opposition to the judgment of the church, neither is he allowed to urge his opinions against the opinions of the church.* If there were no church discipline and government, the church would go to fragments; it could not hold together as a body. There have ever been individuals of independent minds who have claimed that they were right, that God had especially taught, impressed, and led them. Each has a theory of his own, views peculiar to himself, and each claims that his views are in accordance with the word of God. Each one has a different theory and faith, yet each claims special light from God. ***These draw away from the body, and each one is a separate church of himself.*** All these cannot be right, yet they all claim to be led of the Lord. CCh 241
2. There have ever been in the church those who are constantly inclined toward individual independence. They seem *unable to realize that independence of spirit is liable to lead the human agent to have too much confidence in himself and to trust in his own judgment rather than to respect the counsel and highly esteem the judgment of his brethren, especially of those in the offices that God has appointed for the leadership of His people. God has invested His church with special authority and power which no one can be justified in disregarding and despising, for he who does this despises the voice of God.* AA 163
3. When anyone is drawing apart from **the organized body** of God's commandment keeping people, when he begins to weigh the church in his human scales and begins to pronounce judgment against them, *then you may know that God is not leading him. He is on the wrong track.* 3 SM 18
4. **God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church, while the church—Christ's body—is left in darkness.** In His providence, He places His servants in close connection with His church, in order that they may have less confidence in themselves, and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to

those who wish to move independently, who are not willing to submit to the teachings of the spirit of God, and who will not listen to advice or counsel. Let such ever bear in mind that ***God has a church upon the earth, to which He has delegated power.*** Men will want to follow their own independent judgment, despising counsel and reproof; but *just as surely as they do this, they will depart from the faith, and disaster and the ruin of souls will follow... Satan will become their leader, and they will join him in his constant endeavors to tear down that which God is building up...* MR 311

5. **God** is leading a people out from the world upon the exalted platform of eternal truth, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. He will discipline and fit up His people. They will not be at variance, one believing one thing and another having faith and views entirely opposite, each moving independently of the body. Through the diversity of the gifts and governments that He has placed in the church, they will all come to the unity of the faith. If one man takes his views of Bible truth without regard to the opinion of his brethren, and justifies his course, ***alleging that he has a right to his own peculiar views, and then presses them upon others, how can he be fulfilling the prayer of Christ? And if another and still another arises, each asserting his right to believe and talk what he pleases without reference to the faith of the body, where will be that harmony which existed between Christ and His Father, and which Christ prayed might exist among His brethren?*** TM 29, 30

6. **The present truth is not difficult to be understood,** and the people whom God is leading will be united upon this broad, firm platform. He will not use individuals of different faith, opinions, and views, to scatter and divide. Heaven and holy angels are working to unite, to bring into the unity of the faith, into the one body. **Satan opposes this, and is determined to scatter, and divide, and bring in different sentiments, that the prayer of Christ may not be answered:** "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." John 17:20, 21. Jesus designed that the faith of His people should be one. *If one goes forth preaching one thing, and another differing with him preaches something else, how can those who believe through their word be one?* There will be difference of

I saw that your views concerning swine's flesh [This remarkable testimony was written October 21, 1858, nearly five years before the great vision of 1863, in which the light upon health reform was given. When the right time came, the subject was given in a manner to move all our people. How wonderful are the wisdom and goodness of God! It might be as wrong to crowd the milk, salt, and sugar question now, as the pork question in 1858.—J.W., *note to second edition.*] would prove no injury if you have them to yourselves; but in your judgment and opinion you have made this question a test, <207> and your actions have plainly shown your faith in this matter. If God requires His people to abstain from swine's flesh, He will convict them on the matter. He is just as willing to show His honest children their duty, as to show their duty to individuals upon whom He has not laid the burden of His work. If it is the duty of the church to abstain from swine's flesh, **God will discover it to more than two or three. He will teach His church their duty.**

**God is leading out a people, not a few separate individuals here and there, one believing this thing, another that.** Angels of God are doing the work committed to their trust. The third angel is leading out and purifying a people, and they should move with him unitedly. **Some run ahead of the angels that are leading this people;** but they have to retrace every step, and meekly follow no faster than the angels lead. **I saw that the angels of God would lead His people no faster than they could receive and act upon the important truths communicated to them.** But some restless spirits do not more than half do up their work. As the angel leads them, they get in haste for something new, and rush on without divine guidance, and thus bring confusion and discord into the ranks. They do not speak or act in harmony with the body. I saw that you both must speedily be brought where you are willing to be led, instead of desiring to lead, or Satan will step in and lead you in his way, to follow his counsel. Some look at your set notions, and consider them an evidence of humility. They are deceived. You both are making work for repentance.

[from a 20 page 1907 testimony *Individual Responsibility and Christian Unity* found in TM 485 and SpTB09 14....]

While it is true that the Lord guides individuals, it is also true that **He is leading out a people, not a few separate individuals here and there, one believing this thing, another that.** Angels of God are doing the

leading out and purifying a people, and they should move with him unitedly. . . .

Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work **there is no such thing as every man's being independent.** . . . In order that the Lord's work may advance healthfully and solidly, His people must draw together.

God has a church upon the earth, who are His chosen people, who keep His commandments. **He is leading, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there, but a people.**

There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order. **If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong.** Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port.

"God has a church upon the earth who are His chosen people, who keep His commandments. **He is leading, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there, but a people.** The truth is a sanctifying power; but **the church militant is not the church triumphant. There are tares among the wheat.** 'Wilt thou then that we . . . gather them up?' was the question of the servant; but the master answered, 'Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.' The gospel net draws not only good fish, but bad ones as well, and the Lord only knows who are His.

"It is our individual duty to walk humbly with God. **We are not to seek any strange, new message. We are not to think that the chosen ones of God who are trying to walk in the light compose Babylon.** [ ] The fallen denominational churches are Babylon. Babylon has been fostering poisonous doctrines, the wine of error. This wine of error is made up of false doctrines, such as the natural immortality of the soul, the eternal torment of the wicked, the denial of the pre-existence of Christ prior to His

and kindred errors are presented <62> to the world by the various churches, and thus the Scriptures are fulfilled that say, 'For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.' It is a wrath which is created by false doctrines, and when kings and presidents drink this wine of the wrath of her fornication, they are stirred with anger against those who will not come into harmony with the false and satanic heresies which exalt the false sabbath, and lead men to trample underfoot God's memorial.

It is our individual duty to walk humbly with God. **We are not to seek any strange, new message. We are not to think that the chosen ones of God who are trying to walk in the light compose Babylon.**

Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. **The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reprovved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard.** The world is a workshop in which, through the cooperation of human and divine agencies, Jesus is making experiments by His grace and divine mercy upon human hearts.<sup>428</sup>

God has a distinct people, a church on earth, second to none, but superior to all in their facilities to teach the truth, to vindicate the law of God. God has divinely appointed agencies—men whom He is leading, who have borne the heat and burden of the day, who are cooperating with heavenly instrumentalities to advance the kingdom of Christ in our world. Let all unite with these chosen agents, and be found at last among those who have the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus.<sup>429</sup>

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Ch. 2 & 3 of *Selected Messages, Book 3 (3SM)* are "Unity in the Church" and "Independent Action".

Here are a few sample quotes. (look for more...!)

The testimony of every believer in the truth must be as one. All your little differences, which arouse the combative spirit among brethren, are devices of Satan to divert minds from the great and fearful issue before us. The true peace

and earnest prayer the false peace that exists to a large degree is disturbed. Now there is earnest work to do. Now is the time to manifest your soldierly qualities; let the Lord's people present a united front to the foes of God and truth and righteousness. . . . {3SM 20.1}

No advice or sanction is given in the Word of God to those who believe the third angel's message to lead them to suppose that they can draw apart. This you may settle with yourselves forever. It is the devising of unsanctified minds that would encourage a state of disunion. . . . {3SM 21.2}

Christ is the uniting link in the golden chain which binds believers together in God. There must be no separating in this great testing time. . . . {3SM 21.3}

Human feelings will lead men to take the work into their own hands, and the building thus becomes disproportionate. . . . {3SM 21.4}

God is teaching, leading, and guiding His people. .... There will be, among the remnant of these last days, as there were with ancient Israel, those who wish to move independently, who are not willing to submit to the teachings of the Spirit of God, and who will not listen to advice or counsel. Let such ever bear in mind that God has a church upon the earth, to which He has delegated power. Men will want to follow their own independent judgment, despising counsel and reproof; but just as surely as they do this they will depart from the faith, and disaster and ruin of souls will follow. .... --Letter 104, 1894. {3SM 23.1}

It is a delusion of the enemy for anyone to feel that he can disconnect from agencies which God has appointed and work on an independent line of his own, in his own supposed wisdom, and yet be successful.-- {3SM 25.4}

Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work **there is no such thing as every man's being independent.** (May, 1909).--9T 257 {3SM 26.5}