

THE GOSPEL AND SUBJECTIVISM

Religious convictions based solely upon feelings and experiences characterize our times. These traits have always been trademarks of Pentecostalism and Holiness groups, but they now affect all of the sects—and not a few brethren. Most religionists trust their eternal destiny to a mere hunch or feeling. Mormons give their sincere, but misguided, “testimony” concerning Joseph Smith and his Book of Mormon because they prayed about it and God confirmed it by a “burning in their breasts.” All such things are only as certain as the feelings, emotions, and moods of those who “testify” about them. Is there anything more fickle than human feelings and emotions?

Such experiences and feelings leave men with no standard. The insincere imposter can claim experiences equal to or even better than those of the most sincere devotee. Pentecostals who do not accept Joseph Smith and his Book of Mormon are obligated (to be consistent) to accept the Mormon “testimony.” (In fact, such religionists who claim to believe in Christ, if they are consistent and fair, must accept the Hindu who sincerely feels that his salvation rests upon Pagan rites and deities.) While not impugning the sincerity of anyone, it must be a very convenient form of religion that rests on “it is so because I say so or I feel so.” This philosophy is correctly called “subjectivism” (“a doctrine that individual feeling...is the ultimate criterion of the good and the right,” *Webster*). Only by following such a doctrine could one smite his breast and declare, “I wouldn’t trade the feeling I have right here for a stack of Bibles”!

Neither the Lord nor His apostles ever rested the salvation they offer upon subjectivism. Nor did they ever count mere feelings or emotions as evidences of salvation. The authority from which their Gospel (**the** Gospel, Gal. 1:6–9) sprang was not from the imaginings, “hope-so’s,” “think so’s,” or personal feelings of anyone—

themselves or others. Their message was not, “Look what we are doing for Jesus,” but “Look what Jesus has done and can do for you.” The message they preached was objective (as opposed to subjective), for it was the Truth, an objective, inflexible standard independent of their own thoughts and feelings. The Gospel of Christ, faithfully communicated to us in the New Testament, is **God’s** thinking, not man’s (John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:13; Gal. 1:6–12; et al.). When men wanted to be saved, they were not told to pray till they “felt” a certain way, but to obey the Gospel commands that would put them in touch with the cleansing blood of Christ (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3–4; et al.). Only by obeying this objective Gospel can one who believes in Christ know that he is saved.

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