

" . . . Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error"

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THE ROOTS OF APOSTASY

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What do we mean by "apostasy?"

The word comes from the Greek *apostasias*, meaning "a defection, a revolt, a desertion of a post or station in life." Webster's unabridged defines it as: "An abandonment of what one has voluntarily professed; a total desertion or departure from one's faith, principles or party."

The threat and thrust of apostasy was a major problem in the early church. This is very evident from such portions of Scripture as: Luke 21:34-46; Acts 20:28-30; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-4:4; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 5; 1 John 4:1-4; Jude v. 1-19.

To deny that we face the same threat and thrust today would be naive. The clear teaching of the Word of God is that our age will not culminate in world-conversion, but in world-perversion. It will not consummate with a unanimous approval of the "faith, once and for all delivered unto the saints", but in an unprecedented apostasy from that particular body of Christian truth.

The Bible student that fails to see this is destined to discouragement and despair. The confusion in this regard is appalling. The purpose of God in this Age is not to convert the world, but to call out the Church, the Bride of Christ.

Apostasy is a strange thing. There are times when it is almost impossible to differentiate between symptoms and sources, consequen-

es and causes, and fruits and roots. We had in the farmlands of South Dakota an obnoxious wild rose plant which was usually called the "devil weed". The nomenclature was not our own. It was the usually accepted term. Any attempt to dig it out would reveal a multitudinous tangle of roots running in all directions, connecting the one plant to the next. There are many roots to this thing called apostasy." But we shall discover that there is one "taproot" that becomes the tie-in for all the other little roots.

In the Book of Hebrews this pattern of things is quite evident. Arthur S. Way in his unique translation of the Epistle writes in the introductory statement: "The persons to whom the Epistle was in the first instance addressed were probably the Christian Jews of Palestine, perhaps Jerusalem itself, upon whom strong pressure was constantly being put in order to make them renounce their faith, and return to the synagogue. The Epistle furnishes internal evidence that some had apostatized already, and that many were wavering". Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas in his most commendable commentary "Let Us Go On" quotes from the pen of Bishop Westcott. The bishop writes: "The more I study the tendencies of the time in some of the busiest centres of English life (and we could add America and the world!), the more deeply I feel that

the Spirit of God warns us of our urgent civil and spiritual dangers through the prophecies of Jeremiah and the Epistle to the Hebrews. May our Nation and Church be enabled to learn the lessons which these books teach while there is still time to use them". Dr. A. T. Robertson in a work that I personally prize very highly, "Word Pictures of the New Testament", puts it rather succinctly: "In Hebrews the author is battling to stop a stampede from Christ to Judaism, a revolt (apostasy) in truth from the living God".

Let us check the developments of "apostasy" by taking a look first of all at Hebrews 2:1, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip". In a certain sense this is the key note, the battle cry, of the Epistle. Apostasy usually begins in a casual, indifferent, drifting from our spiritual moorings. It is generally a thoughtless thing, easy-going, and uncataclysmic. Dr. Thomas suggests: "The thought is of a boat being swept along past its anchorage with no oars and no sails, and at the mercy of the currents".

These "spiritual moorings" are definitely stated to be "the things which we have heard", the revelation of Truth, the fact that: "In many separate revelations—each of which set forth a portion of the Truth—and in different ways God spoke of old to our forefathers in and by the prophets. But in the last of these days He has spoken to us in the person of a Son" (1:1,2, Amp. N.T.). The emphasis on Divine Inspiration in this portion and in the entire Epistle is most unique. The Word of God is described as "living", as "energetic", as "sharper than a two-edged sword", as "piercing", deeply penetrating, and a "critic" of the "thoughts and intents of the heart" (4:12). We are warned not to "refuse Him that speaketh" (12:25).

The patent emphasis on Verbal and Plenary Inspiration moves strikingly into focus in several places.

It is becoming increasingly popular to relegate the Bible to a secondary place not only in national life but in the very citadels of Christianity. Both Karl Barth and Emil Brunner of the Neo-orthodox persuasion insist that the Scriptures merely represent a human attempt to dissect and define the revelatory work of God. To speak of the Bible as being infallible to them is simple folly. To insist that it is authoratative is to make it into an idol. Rather than a revelation, they say, it is a record of revelation. They go even further. They say that it is only the Word of God when it strikes the individual person.

This type of teaching isn't exactly new. In fact, here we have the "Achilles' Heel" of Pietism. What a mighty work of God it was! It came as a second Pentecost upon and into a church-world grown stiff, starched, stale, and sordid in an overdose of sacerdotalism, sacramentarianism, and secularism. It faced up to an orthodoxy that had the "form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5). But in their zealous attempt to counteract this spiritual plague they fell for the clever ruse: "Life before doctrine!" It is a very common cliché. It is the usual "out" of little theologians who despair of wrestling with deep doctrinal truth. It has the touch sanctimoniousness, but is actually diabolical in essence. Where does the Bible teach that one can have spiritual reality without scriptural truth? Our Lord said, "Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?" (Mark 12:24). Life must have proper bone structure and muscle fiber. Without it it is nothing more than a pitiful glob.

How does this "drifting" develop? It begins with a strange "dullness," a carnal sluggishness, a pa-

thetic irresponsiveness to the revealed Word. Note carefully Hebrews 5:11-14. It evidences itself in a shallow insensitivity to moral and spiritual values. It proceeds with an attitude of disdain for the "Spirit of Grace" (10:29). Listen to the blasphemous words of Dr. Nels Ferre, "The God of love needs no placating, no offering once for all to satisfy Him . . . By doctrines insisting on a blood-thirsty God—that is, that required Jesus' death before He could allow Himself to love us, so that He even sent His son **basically** to die—all Christian theology effectively denied that God as God, the Father Himself, is naturally and eternally love" ("The Sun and the Umbrella," Pp. 31,32). A more warped approach to the fact of sin and salvation, God's entire Redemption Program, will be difficult to find, and yet it is a very common reaction in our day of liberal thinking. This man even has the temerity to suggest that the Epistle to the Hebrews is an "umbrella" that keeps the sunshine of God's love from shining upon us! (P. 31).

This drifting culminates in a selling of our "birthright" for a "mess of pottage" (12:16). Esau, Jacob's twin and elder brother, had the usual rights of the first-born. Most of the family inheritance was his. He had the prerogative of serving as the priest in the home. He had also the unusual distinction of being one of the progenitors of the promised Messiah. But the Word says that he "despised" his birthright. (Gen. 25:34). He looked upon it as something of inferior value. He is described as being "a fornicator" and "profane." We can only guess what the first of these implied. It could have reference to his marriage to Canaanite women. His being profane does not mean "blasphemy" as such, but rather secularism pure and simple. Moral laxness and disdain for things holy has always been a direct fruit of disregard

for God and His Word.

Above many a pulpit, above many a theological seminary, above many a denomination can be written the tragic words, "For one morsel of meat sold his birthright!"

Dr. R. A. Finlayson in a masterly chapter, in Dr. Carl F. H. Henry's most worthy volume, "Revelation and the Bible," quotes one Martin J. Hienecken as saying, "Without Kierkegaard there would have been no Barth, no dialectical theology, no return to the Bible that would preserve any kind of scientific respectability," and then goes on to say: "Without doubt 'scientific respectability' is the *raison d'être* of neo-orthodoxy". We want the respect of the world, the religious cultures, the scientific mind and **ad infinitum**, and in our rush to acquire this seeming status we are willing to sell our birthright of the "faith once and for all delivered unto the saints" for a miserable mess of soul-withering, Holy Spirit grieving, God-dishonoring pottage.

The saintly and scholarly Bishop J. C. Ryle diagnosed it rather well: "These people live in a kind of fog. They see nothing clearly and do not know what to believe. They have not made up their minds about any great point in the Gospel, and seem to be content to be **honorary members of all schools of thought**. For their lives they could not tell you what they think is truth about justification, or regeneration, or sanctification, or the Lord's supper, or baptism, or faith, or conversion, or inspiration, or the future state. They are eaten up with a morbid dread of 'controversy' and an ignorant dislike of 'party spirit'; and yet they really cannot define what they mean by these phrases. The only point you can make out is that they admire earnestness and cleverness and charity, and cannot believe that any clever, earnest, charitable man can ever be in the

wrong!" ("Holiness", P. 296).

But having said all this, what is really the main point, the great tap-root in all apostasy?

Without fear of being gainsaid it is clear from any number of Scripture references that apostasy has its main root in a lack of real love for the Son of God, a downgrading of His person, a casting aside of His final authority, and a growing disregard for His reconciling death on the Cross. Love is the watchword! Not a shallow, emotional thing only, but a love "poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 5:5, Amp. N.T.), a love that has "flooded our hearts", literally inundated our hearts (Williams). The one decisive, incisive, and probing question that must still be asked is, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?"

The seven letters to the churches of Revelation (2-3:) reveal a tragic spiritual deterioration from Ephesus at the beginning to Laodicea at the end. Only two of them escape Divine indictments; namely, Smyrna and Philadelphia. The others are made to wince in the blazing light of a Divine investigation. Laodicea's sickening "lukewarmness" and tragic self-deception roots back to the "deadness" of Sardis. The lifelessness of Sardis hinges on the "unrepentant" condition of Thyatira. The impenitence of Thyatira stems back to the worldliness of Pergamos, the church that had left her pilgrim-status and moved down to the levels of the world, "where Satan's throne is". But the fountainhead, the tap-root, of it all is to be found in the sorrow-filled words to Ephesus, "Thou hast left thy first love!"

There is a like note in Jeremiah: "Thus saith the Lord; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals (The love of thy bridal estate! Rotherham), when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that

is not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord" (Jer. 2:1,2). Then come the words, breathing with Divine pathos, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For My people have committed two evils; **they have forsaken Me** the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (v.12,13).

Here is the primary root of all apostasy!

It is therefore that the Holy Spirit in Hebrews, and all the Scriptures, seeks to hold up the Lord Jesus Christ. The first chapter in the Epistle is one of the greatest Christological statements in all Holy Writ. He is the "Son"; the "heir of all things"; the One who planned the ages; the "brightness", the shining-out of the Father's Glory; the "express image of His person", the "exact impression" of the Father; the "Upholder" of all things; the "Redeemer"; the "Exalted One"; the One the angels worship; and the eternally remaining One! He is indeed greater than the angels, greater than Moses, greater than Aaron, and has promised and perfected a Great Salvation. He is the One who appeared to "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"; who now appears in the presence of God for us; and who shall appear "the second time without sin unto salvation" (9:24-28). He is the "Great Shepherd of the sheep"! (13:20).

Love to the Son of God places Him in complete authority in my life and thinking. It could not be otherwise if God's Word is true. Dr. Kenneth Kantzer puts it very well: "Once we are committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we must immediately accept also the authority of the Bible; for we discover that our Lord Himself accepted its authority and taught His followers to do likewise. To admit that Jesus is Lord, but to reject His instruction as to the authority

of the Bible is, to put it very bluntly, little more than pious self-deception" ("The Word for the Century", P. 41). Bishop H. C. Moule, a man of unquestioned scholarship and spiritual unction, affirmed: "He (the Lord Jesus) trusted the Bible, and, though there are in it things inexplicable and intricate that have puzzled me much, I am going, not in a blind sense, but reverently to trust the Book because of HIM", Dr. Frank Gaebelin adds a most quotable word: "The Christian who in his view of the Bible stands on any lower ground than that on which His Lord stood does so at his own spiritual peril" ("Revelation and the Bible", P. 398). The Apostle John wrote: "He that believeth not

God hath made Him a liar" (1 John 5:10). There can be no middle ground here.

Heaven-born love radiates heaven-born loyalty. If my Lord believed in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, so must I! (John 5:46,47) If my Lord believed in the "one Isaiah", so must I! (John 12:41). If my Lord believed in the real Daniel as the author of that prophecy, so must I! (Matt. 24:15).

In the final analysis this entire question revolves around the Person of the Son of God. This seems utterly naive to the sophisticated mind, but to the heart filled with the love of God it is as natural as the response of nature to the energizing sunshine of the month of June.

Though hearts grow faint and spirits sink,
By every wind of feeling blown;
Though faith itself may seem to fail,
I rest upon Thy Word alone.

That Word of power that framed the worlds,
Unfailing, changeless, strong and sure
Though Heaven and earth should pass away,
What Thou hast spoken, must endure.

Is Thine arm shortened, Thine ear dulled?
What Thou hast sworn hast Thou forgot?
God of the everlasting years
All else may fail; Thou failest not.

Against the foeman's fiery darts
I wield anew the Spirit's sword,
And answer every fresh assault
With ever fresh "Thus saith the Lord"!

And when some promised blessing seems
Too great, too wonderful for me,
I dare by faith to call it mine,
With "It is written" all my plea.

—Annie Johnson Flint

THE NATURE OF APOSTASY

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From the very beginning of the Church there have been those who, having professed the Christian faith, have repudiated its vital doctrines while outwardly remaining within its fold. In writing of a coming culmination of apostasy in the personal Anti-Christ, the Apostle Paul declares that even in his day "the mystery of lawlessness doth already work" (2 Thess. 2:7). John warned against the false prophets who had gone out into the world (1 Jn. 4:1), and specific cases of apostasy are referred to in the epistles (2 Tim. 2:17-18).

At the very root of the meaning of the Greek word *apostasia* (Apostasy) is the idea of rebellion. Apostasy is a rebellion, a deliberate rejection of truth, a turning away from revealed light. As the church age progresses the apostasy among the professing church will increase. The parable of the leaven, illustrating as it does the progress of evil doctrine in the professing church, declares that evil doctrine will finally permeate the entire professing church, till it is "all leavened" (Matt. 13:33). From its inauspicious beginning in the apostolic age it will work its way throughout the entire structure of professing Christendom and finally produce the great harlot-church spoken of in Revelation 17 which will be in league with the Man of Sin.

The pattern of prophetic Scripture indicates that there is no successful deterrent to the progress of apostasy. While the true testimony of Christ will continue till He comes for His own, it is also true that the apostasy will deepen as that event draws nearer. In order that God's people may be able to discern apostates and obediently "turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5) from

them, certain characteristics of the apostasy should be noted.

I. Rebellion Against Divine Revelation

The wicked heart of man has always been scornful of divine revelation. Cain did not wish to accept God's plan, Nimrod went about to walk in his own way, and numerous others have followed suit. The very essence of apostasy is the rejection of divine revelation. Apostates are described as those who "turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:4). The truth is inscripturated in the Bible, and those who reject the truth reject the Bible.

While attacks have been made upon the Bible since it first appeared, no age has witnessed such an all-out attack as has come in the last one hundred years. Beginning with the rationalistic criticisms of German skeptics in the 18th and 19th centuries the tide of unbelief has gained momentum until at the present hour the vast majority of leaders of Christendom do not accept the Bible as the verbally-inspired Word of God, authoritative for faith and practice. Modern neo-orthodoxy and neo-liberalism now view the Bible as a record of man's response to divine revelation, or, more plainly, human interpretations of experiences with God. It has no divine authority over our lives, is not the source of fixed doctrine, and is replete with errors, human foibles, and outmoded ideas. Such attitudes toward God's holy Word are certainly prime examples of the thinking of apostates.

II. Rejection of Sound Doctrine

In speaking of apostates Paul predicts that the time will come

when they will not "endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3). In another place he notes that they will prefer the "doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). Sound doctrine is essential to orthodoxy, to strong preaching, and to successful evangelism. Numerous times, particularly in the Pastoral Epistles, Paul exhorts his readers to maintain "the faith," "the truth" and "sound doctrine." That the New Testament purports to set forth a system of doctrine, of interrelated and divinely-authoritative teaching, can hardly be disputed if one accepts the testimony of Scripture to itself. Christ said, "If any man will to do my will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17). Christ taught a system of doctrine, and claimed that it came from God. Yet modern liberals deny emphatically that the Bible is a "textbook on doctrine," or that it states any propositional doctrinal truths as such. It only gives men's experiences with, and opinions about, truth. There is nothing final in the realm of doctrine to be found in the Bible, according to liberal theology.

Most unfortunately, some in evangelical circles have sounded a dangerous note by declaring that they do not emphasize doctrine but life—a minimal doctrinal basis is sufficient; it is the life that counts. Some serious reflection would immediately dispel this idea. How can one hope to live an obedient Christian life without a knowledge of Christian doctrine? The two are inseparably united. Such an emphasis is reminiscent of the forerunners of the modern ecumenical movement who authored the slogan: "Doctrine divides; service unites."

Most of the doctrines of the Christian faith have been rejected by leaders within the major denominations of the day, and by multitudes of their followers. Mention has already been made of

their attitude toward the inspiration of Scripture. They also repudiate the blood atonement, the bodily resurrection, the virgin birth, the personal second coming, the total depravity of man and other doctrines as well. Most modern denominations in their conventions and denominational assemblies occupy themselves with considerations of a political and social nature rather than in expounding the great doctrines. Denominational papers are filled with pleas for racial justice, articles on the United Nations, labor problems, etc., but little place is found for the Word of God and the teachings it contains.

The barrenness of much modern preaching is directly related to this lack of doctrinal content. Young ministers are taught when in seminary that the Bible is not a source of divine doctrine, hence their preaching lacks any authority. They themselves, not accepting the doctrine of the new birth as taught in John three, are perhaps not even born again and cannot proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ.

III. Attitude Toward the Person of Christ

One's attitude toward the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ is a good indicator of one's convictions in other areas. The modern ecumenically-minded church as a whole does not have a very high view of the Person of our Lord. They reject the virgin birth as a "biological impossibility." His claim to deity is preposterous. He was a good teacher, filled with God's presence, but not the incarnate and eternal Jehovah, the Creator of all things. His miracles were greatly exaggerated or misunderstood by those who wrote of them, and were not miracles at all in the orthodox understanding of that term.

What does Scripture say should be our attitude toward Christ?

John, after discussing in some detail in his first epistle the deity of Christ, declares in his second epistle as follows:

“Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, Hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching the same hath both the Father and the Son. If such an one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh of his evil deeds” (2 John 9-10, ASV).

John meant to instruct his readers that the attitude of a person to the Lord Jesus Christ was very important. It is not enough to declare that we believe in Christ, or that we love Christ, or that we worship Christ. Who is the Christ that we believe in, love, or worship? Who is He? The problem of defining the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a very real one. It is not acceptable to leave such definition to the individual or group. What does the Scripture say about Christ? Is He God? Is He eternal? Is He now living? Will He personally and visibly come again? These questions cannot be dodged. Nor can they be denied as do the apostates of today. Division cannot be made between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith as some do today. No such division of the Person of Christ exists. The Jesus of history is the Christ of faith. They are one and the same, inseparably united, two natures in one person without any confusion, contradiction or change. Liberals want people to follow a Christ who is a figment of their imagination. “What think ye of Christ?” This is a fundamental question which divides those who are true to the Bible from those who are not. One who, having been confronted with the truth, rejects the Scriptural answer to this question is an apostate.

IV. Feigned Words

While apostates reject the doctrines of Christianity, they do it in a way which is very difficult for people, who are not close students, to detect. Many of these men, if asked whether they believe a certain doctrine, will reply, “Yes, of course.” This satisfies the innocent or gullible, but may not be the truth. Liberal ministers, for instance, preach about the resurrection on Easter morning, and perhaps refer to it at other times. Undiscerning persons, no doubt, suppose that they mean by this that Christ’s body came out of the grave on the third day. But this is what they do **not** mean. The resurrection to them is only a theological term which they apply to the reality of eternal life, or to the notion that Christ’s spirit lives on through the ages in His Church. While employing the term “resurrection” they do not mean by that term what orthodox Christians have always meant. They have foisted a new meaning upon it which is not found in the Scriptures except where the term is used in a Spiritual sense of the conversion of a soul. The Biblical term “resurrection,” normally, refers to a **bodily** resurrection. Certainly this is its meaning as used of Christ coming forth from the tomb.

The Apostle Peter warned about this misuse of terms long ago when he wrote, “And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you . . .” (2 Pet. 2:3). The term “feigned words” means “moulded words,” that is, language moulded or twisted to fit the occasion. These men can use fundamental terminology to express modernistic and unbelieving thoughts. Confusion has been “thrice-compounded” in Christendom because of this very thing. Apostates are marked by double-talk, lack of straightforwardness, and unwillingness to be “categor-

ized" into "neat compartments." They desire to be fluid in their theology, never arriving at the truth, but always pursuing it.

V. Loose Ethics

Already mentioned is the fact that a person's life is profoundly influenced by what he believes. This is no less true of apostates than of genuine believers. If a person rejects the cardinal doctrines revealed in Scripture, his life will show it. The evil works of apostates are described by Paul in I Timothy 6:3-5. Their pride, their scholarly hair-splitting, their corrupted minds and their greediness of monetary gain are all mentioned by the apostle. Lacking regeneration and the discipline of the Word of God, their lives become disorderly. In 2 Timothy 3:1-9 he again gives a picture of their loose ethics. This is also mentioned by Jude in verse four.

The moral results of several generations of apostate teaching are seen in modern America. Much of the moral break-down that faces the nation today stems from a repudiation of the revealed Word of God by the professing Church. Failure to believe the Book, and to preach against sin and to stress personal salvation has brought a terrible harvest in America and the end is not yet. Modern religious liberalism (including neo-orthodoxy and neo-liberalism and their ilk) has such a loose view of the holiness of God, of ethical principles and of truth in general that they cannot hope to produce holy saints.

Accepting, as most of them do, the theory of organic evolution as the explanation of the origin of all things, including man, they have no fixed moral standards to which they can point their people. Moral standards are relative and changing. What is acceptable today in the realm of morals, may not be

acceptable in the next generation and vice versa. Some modern apostate preachers have openly or slyly recommended some type of "free love," or pre-marital sexual experimentation and the like. How can they do this and claim to be messengers of God? Because they have rejected the final authority on morals—the Bible—and have accepted in its place the latest finding of unbelieving sociologists, psychologists, psychiatrists and assorted other persons who know nothing and care nothing about the eternal principles of righteousness expressed in God's Word.

Conclusion

Is there any hope? Can this terrible apostasy be stopped? The Biblical answer to that question is "No." The apostasy will spread, grow deeper and finally engulf the entire professing Church.

But the course for God's people is clear. They must remain separate from contamination. They must witness vigorously for Christ, asking God to help them win others to Him. They must maintain a strong stand for the doctrines of the faith as revealed in the Word of God. They must also be willing to suffer reproach, and, if necessary, even death for the name of Christ.

To those who are faithful in such a ministry God will give ample rewards when He returns for His own.

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THE MATURITY OF APOSTASY

Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor

The New Testament gives overwhelmingly clear evidence that the latter days will be capped with an apostasy of universal dimension. One is impressed with the uniformity of the writers in depicting major characteristics and developments in conjunction with the final period of history. In fact, apostasy will reach a position of maturity.

The Scriptural Declaration

At the close of our Lord's ministry certain declarations were made by Him pertaining to the characteristics prevalent during the conclusion of the age. He says, "As it was in the days of Noah so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man . . . Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded . . . Even so shall it be in the days when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:26,28,30). The days of Noah and Lot were times when materialism, immorality, lasciviousness, and violence dominated the entire generation. No student of contemporary life can fail to see a parallelism with our own generation. We shall now proceed to discuss the analogy of those days with our own times. Peter makes it specific in the words, "There shall be in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying where is the promise of His coming" (2 Pet. 3:3-4). Paul also writes concerning the latter-days, "For that day shall not come except there come a falling away first" (2 Thess. 3:3). In Jude's brief Epistle, the entire content deals with apostasy, especially its maturity at the conclusion of the age. The writer declares, "Woe unto them for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam" (Jude

v.11). Balaam, the apostate, is used as a prophetic type of the end-time spiritual declension. In his Epistles, John devotes considerable space to the subject of apostasy. The great Seer reveals that a universal antichristian system will involve the domain of Christendom. It is depicted as "Mystery Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots" (Rev. 17:5). This false system will wield an extra-ordinary influence in the latter days. Revelation, chapters 17 and 18, provide us with a solemn description of the final apostasy. It is clearly depicted in this passage that the entire false system will be directed by a person. The Antichrist is the embodiment in a single personality of the entire antichristian movement, and this marks the climatic development of apostasy throughout the ages.

The Present Apostasy

Less than a century ago scoffers and Christ-deniers were for the most part outside the church. Consistently they made their onslaughts against the Church as outsiders, and scarcely ever were they on the inside. When Ralph Waldo Emerson, a minister, could no longer subscribe to some of the doctrines of the Church, he had the decency of stepping out altogether. In our day infidelity and liberalism seek to remain on the inside where they may occupy positions of power and influence over established religious organizations. They sit in "Moses' Seat" as it were, commanding authority as bishops, executives, editors, seminary deans and professors. From these strategic places they inculcate the minds of the people with the deadly virus of doubt and unbelief. A few years ago a prominent seminary dean was installed in the West who

openly disregarded the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. Some of the widest known theologians of our time as, e.g., Brunner, Barth, Neibuhr, Bultmann, Tillich, and Van Dusen have in their writings downgraded the Scriptures as not being the inerrant, authoritative revelation of God. Neo-Orthodoxy, which they represent, seems to have become the mainstream of present-day theology. This poisoned theology is permeating many of the theological institutions of our land and other areas as well. Dr. Cornelius Van Til of Westminster Theological Seminary charged recently, "Barthianism is even more hostile to the theology of Luther and Calvin than Romanism", Truly Neo-orthodoxy represents a deviation from the old paths, and it is a part of the end-time apostasy.

Specific Examples of Apostasy

Indeed, the 20th century Ecumenical Movement repersents a spiritual apostasy of a very great dimension. America formally deviated from Evangelical Christianity when the Federal Council of Churches of Christ was formed in 1908. While it embraced the federation idea (not church union) still it envisioned a far-reaching program in seeking to change the present world order through the Social Gospel. In fact, the Social Gospel was set down in definite articles which constituted a creed to which the Federation was committed. Forty years later, or in 1948, The World Council of Churches was launched and it included the majority of Protestant denominations. To this larger ecumenical system the old Greek Orthodox Church as well as the Russian Orthodox Church have now adhered. As of now, Protestantism is fading out in this massive world church union because the ecclesiastical wings are achieving more and more dominance in the movement. At the Third World Council meeting held at New Delhi, India, a few years ago, several Papal delegates were

warmly welcomed. And at the Second Vatican Council, less than 2 years ago, over 100 Protestant leaders were seated in the nave of St. Peter's cathedral at Rome. Attending the first audience given by Pope Paul, a prominent American clergyman said, "It was a wonderful experience and I think from the things he said to us we may look forward to an increased and continuing effort to bring the branches of the Christian Church into a common spiritual home". It is now rumored that this all-inclusive proposed union will be called The Christian Catholic Church. Prophetically we find the judgment and the destruction of this apostate system is given Revelation, chapters 17 and 18. This Book also exhorts people in the words, "Come out of her my people, that ye may not be partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

As we study the contemporary scene, we find the apostasy is expanding continually. At the recent quadrennial meeting of the second largest Protestant denomination in America, a Roman Prelate was chosen as the guest speaker. It was the first time in the history of that denomination that one of the bishops of the Roman Church had appeared before their quadrennium. The bishop was enthusiastically received, and when he had concluded his address, a standing ovation was given him.

Not so few in the National Council of Churches have encouraged as well as participated in the present race demonstrations. No less a person than Rev. Eugene Carson Blake, chief executive officer of his denomination, was commended by the denomination's General Assembly for his courageous action in the area of race relations. We remember that he was arrested at Baltimore, Maryland on July 4, 1963, in a march against a segregated amusement park. Civil disobedience and violation of laws and

city ordinances cannot be condoned, much as one might be sympathetic with a fair program of race relations. The current situation is a part and parcel of the iniquity (lawlessness) which shall abound, see Mt. 24:12. It is tragic indeed that the modern church has moved into a program of intervention in the present world order. The Lord commissioned the Church as a witnessing institution. It was instructed to major in the Gospel and not dabble in the field of social action even though such activity might seem to be meritorious. The prophetic Scriptures predict apostate churchianity will seek massiveness in its goal of full scale intervention in world affairs.

Current developments are shocking and space will allow me only to cite a few instances of deviation and apostasy. Recently a young minister appeared before an Ordination Council at a prominent church in a major city. He read a paper to the ecclesiastical gathering, a document which in my judgment was a written declaration of his unbeliefs. The paper was supposed to be an autobiography as well as a statement of his position. In the document he openly denies the cardinal tenets of the historic faith. He even had the audacity to state his disbelief in an after life. And he did not consider that he had a call to preach, and he did not know why he was in the ministry, or how long he would continue in that capacity. Incredible as it may seem to you readers, he was ordained in that church. (I have on my desk the document which he read to the Ecclesiastical Council).

Not many years ago a leading clergyman at another ordination meeting gave the charge to the congregation in which he appealed to that church in allowing latitude to the young minister in challenging earlier beliefs and in presenting ideas which may not be relevant to the Gospel.

A recent President of the National Council of Churches, while in India, attended a prayer meeting (so-called) of three faiths, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. Three hundred people were present. Referring to this get-together, the renowned clergyman said, "As I listened to the sacred writings of all these religions, and to the prayers of the three co-operating faiths, I was overpowered by the sense of the eternal". Certainly, spiritual discernment had reached a vanishing point so far as he was concerned.

We are moving not only toward an ultimate union of all branches in Christendom, but this union will likely include other systems of religion. Less than two years ago, the President of the United Nations Assembly (a Mohammedan) offered a Moslem prayer at the opening of the conclave. Previously at all opening sessions a minute of silence has been observed. Here a non Christian changed the pattern. It raised the eyebrows of not so few. Protestants and Catholics did not have the courage to assert their positions. The Roman Church is giving up some of its medievalism, and its extensive use of Latin at the mass, in order to become more acceptable to our modern age. Protestantism is diluting its position in order to promote ecumenicity and to achieve universal church unification. It is becoming rather common these days in respectable Protestant Churches that delegates are taken to Catholic Churches and to Jewish Congregations in order to understand more of their religion. All these innovations simply break down the separation required in the Word of God. Cult organizations are making the most out of these situations by picking up millions of people who do not know what they believe in this Babylon of confusion. Apostasy is rapidly reaching a climatic state. Jesus raised the pertinent question,

“When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8).

In view of all this, what ought our position be? Surely this is no day for stammering or pussy-footing. We must not be disarmed by timidity, nor should we allow the fear of the majority to paralyze us. While it is true we shall not be able to stem the tide, or reverse the apostasy, it is still possible to direct those who will listen to the declaration of the truth of God. At Athens Paul did not make much of an impact upon the Athenians whose pagan philosophy dominated the city. Fortunately, however, he succeeded in gaining a few converts to Christ. Indeed, we need to hold high the old lamp of truth in a bewildered and befuddled age. The Gospel trumpet must have a

clear note or else men in confusion will not know what action to take. The form of godliness is becoming universal. Religion is taking on increasing popularity. Ritualism, ecclesiasticalism, and externalism, are expanding throughout Christendom. Protestantism, for the most part, stands anemic, and is allowing the more aggressive religious forces to assume dominance. Unquestionably the apostasy is reaching a maturity in our generation. Babylon, the Great, to which the N.T. Seer points prophetically, may be seen emerging by all those who have discernment or spiritual insight. The end of the age is approaching. We need to stay awake spiritually, also awaken those who are asleep concerning the contemporary dangers facing all of Christendom.

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Rev. E. B. Jones, who had an important part in starting the work of Religion Analysis Service, went to be with the Lord, April 15th, in his 77th year. He spent his last active years in lecturing, and writing,—pleading that Adventists turn from error unto the way of truth. We have greatly appreciated his cooperation in our work.

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Return Requested

PERTINENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

By Rev. R. F. "Mac" McIlmoy
Pastor of Powderhorn Park Baptist Church of Minneapolis, Minn.

QUESTION—*What is apostasy, and can you give me some simple way in which the average Christian can detect an apostate teacher?*

ANSWER—Let me answer the first part by simply saying that apostasy must not be confused with mere indifference to the Word, nor to error or heresy. An apostate has received light, but not life. He may have received, in some degree, the written Word; but he has not received the Living Word. Always remember that light can harden as well as soften!

I believe that Jude gives us a clear answer to the second part of your question. Note verse four in his little book, and you will see three simple marks of an apostate teacher—ungodly, turns the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denies the only Lord Jesus Christ. Then in verse eleven we learn that these men follow three simple patterns already demonstrated by history.

"The Way of Cain"—this is simply false religion. They have no place for the efficacy of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to cleanse from sin. Some deny it openly and others just omit it.

"The Error of Balaam"—this is a false ministry. Balaam is a significant representative of the founders of many cults which have come in the name of the Lord Jesus. They make merchandize out of their followers—they are in it for what they can get out of it! They use enough truth to deceive. They never preach on hell (unless it is to try to prove that it doesn't exist), eternal judgment, or accountability to a holy God. They never offer, as the Bible does, eternal life in the present tense to the believer.

"The Gainsaying of Core"—this is false worship. Korah's sin was that of rebellion against God's appointed priests and intrusion into the presence of God without divine authority. This is a clear picture of all false worship. Rebelling against the Word of God, and His Son they try to force their way into the presence of God. The apostate sets up his own way and method of worship, and often will try to use the Word of God to support his ideas! *Reprint from an earlier issue.*