

The Church In Apostasy

by Chuck Baldwin

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"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition." (II Thess. 2:3)

This passage of Scripture has been one of the most subjectively interpreted verses of the entire New Testament. Early Christians believed various Caesars to be the predicted "man of sin." During the Dark Ages and into the Reformation age, many Christians believed various popes to be the predicted "man of sin." In Arabia around 600 AD, many Christians believed Mohammed to be the "man of sin." During our War for Independence, many Christians believed old King George to be the "man of sin." During the Twentieth Century, many Christians wondered if Hitler or Stalin could be the dreaded "man of sin." Today, many Christians (including this writer) believe that the predicted "man of sin" is none other than a coming Antichrist.

However, regardless of one's interpretation of who the "man of sin" is, there is no doubt about Paul's prediction that before this man comes, there will be a great "falling away first." By "a falling away," Paul was clearly referring to a state or condition of "apostasy." Paul is saying that before the "man of sin" (whoever he is) will be able to seduce and deceive humanity, the church will fall into apostasy.

By definition, apostasy is the condition of those who once (in some degree) embraced the truth, but have now abandoned or forsaken it. Obviously, this applies only to professing Christians. Infidels, agnostics, and unbelievers have no profession from which to apostatize.

Accordingly, whether on a local or universal scale, before various men of sin can seduce and deceive their respective societies, the Church must first be in a state of apostasy. Saying it another way: churches that are sound in the faith, strong in truth, and steadfast in the Word serve as a resistance and retardant to evil men. No wonder the Lord

Jesus said we Christians are "the salt of the earth."

That said, I am personally convinced that, by and large, the churches of America (regardless of denomination) are in a state of apostasy. And as such, offer little or no resistance to the men of sin who seek to seduce and deceive our people.

When a professing Christian President can openly acknowledge his belief in universalism and attack the supreme doctrine of Christianity, that Jesus Christ is the Creator-God become flesh, and there is not an uproar of protestation and denunciation from pulpits all over the country, the Church is in a state of apostasy. And that is exactly what has taken place.

When interviewed by ABC's Charles Gibson, President George W. Bush revealed his lack of even basic understanding of Christian doctrine. Here is a verbatim transcript from that interview:

Q. "Do we all worship the same God, Christian and Muslim?"

A. "I think we do. We have different routes of getting to the Almighty."

Q. "Do Christians and non-Christians and Muslims go to heaven in your mind?"

A. "Yes they do. We have different routes of getting there."

Then, just a few days ago, President Bush, in an interview with Al Arabiya television, said, "I believe in an almighty God, and I believe that all the world, whether they be Muslim, Christian, or any other religion, prays to the same God." In the same interview he said, "I believe there is a universal God. I believe the God that the Muslim prays to is the same God that I pray to. After all, we all came from Abraham. I believe in that universality."

Obviously, George W. Bush is a universalist. His confession is not that of a Christian, but that of a universalist. Any true Christian knows that there is but one mediator between God and man: Christ Jesus. Any true Christian knows that Jesus is the incarnate God--the Creator-God become flesh. Any true Christian knows that Jesus and the Father are one. Any true Christian knows that there is salvation in no other

name, no other god. Any true Christian knows that no one has access to God except through Jesus Christ. Any true Christian knows that there is no God other than Jesus: that Jesus is the fullness of the Godhead bodily. That is Christianity 101.

With the above understanding and because President Bush claims to be a Christian, his statements should be regarded by Christians everywhere as an admission of apostasy and an attack upon the fundamental doctrine of Christ. Yet, there has been no reaction. No admonishments. No calls for repentance. No warnings to Christians to reject such heresy. No protestations whatsoever. Why? There is only one answer: the Church itself is in a state of apostasy!

I will say it plainly: today's pastors and Christians seem to display more loyalty and devotion to George W. Bush than they do to the Lord Jesus Christ. This stands in stark contrast to Christians throughout Church history.

Has the reader ever wondered why the early Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire? After all, the Roman Empire prided itself in being one of the most tolerant and pluralistic of all societies. People were free to worship any god they chose. There was complete freedom of religion throughout the Empire. An old maxim said that there were as many gods in Rome as there were people. Why, then, were Christians singled out for persecution?

The reason Christians were persecuted while people of other beliefs were not was not because they worshipped Jesus Christ. Obviously, Jewish leaders persecuted the early Christians because of their hatred of Jesus, which was due to the fact that He claimed to be their Messiah and Savior--a claim they vehemently rejected. However, the Roman Empire's persecution of Christians was for an entirely different matter.

Rome persecuted Christians because they believed that Jesus Christ was the ONLY God. Under Roman law, Caesar was a god, equal to any other god. Therefore, to be a good Roman, one had to worship Caesar. If one chose to worship another deity, it was fine. As long as he also bowed to Caesar. This was something the early Christians could not

and would not do.

You see, from the very beginning of Church history, Christians believed that Jesus Christ was not a way, He was THE way; not a truth, but THE truth; not a god, but THE God. And for this declaration, for this conviction, and for this belief, early Christians were persecuted, imprisoned, and fed to hungry lions.

Yet today, the Church of Jesus Christ sits silent and still when the President of the United States, himself a professing Christian, publicly denies the central doctrine of Christ and embraces the pagan doctrine of universalism. Again, there is only one explanation: the Church is in a state of apostasy.

Of course, as apostasy spreads throughout the country, the men of sin will increase in strength and number. They will aggressively seek to seduce and deceive the people-- something they are already doing. Furthermore, our Lord already instructed us as to what would happen when such a condition occurs. He told us that when "the salt have lost his savor . . . it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." (Matt. 5:13)

No wonder Jesus asked the question, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) Finding faith and truth in the midst of apostasy would seem to be the challenge for every true child of God these days.

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