



Revised History

Apostasy—it usually starts at the top

By Al Benson August 19, 2020

The subject of apostasy in the Christian churches is one I have been interested in and concerned about over the years—mostly because there seems to have been so much of it even in my lifetime.

In his book *Idols for Destruction* Herbert Schlossberg has dealt with some of this and he has taken in back into Old Testament times. He quoted Malachi 2:8 “But you (priests) have turned aside from the way; you have caused many to stumble by your instruction; you have corrupted the covenant of Levi, says the LORD of hosts.” And he says, further down on the same page (233) that “Placed in the midst of a society sinking into desperate wickedness, the priests and teachers failed to sound the call to repentance and fell into the same low state as the community over which they were given charge. Thus the prophets were called to fulfill the role the religious establishment had spurned.”

He made another interesting statement, one I had not thought about, but, in retrospect, I can see that he was accurate. He said, in part, “...the religious leadership has always prepared the way for apostasy. The constant refrain of the prophetic message was that priests, prophets and teachers had prostituted themselves and turned to the service of evil. (Jeremiah 23:11, Ezekiel 22:26).

He noted that church structures that depart from the truth of Christian doctrine end up losing their distinctiveness and end up sounding just like the society around them. He says “...by and large, the religious institutions of the United States do not teach values that are distinctive to their own traditions but rather use religious terminology that ratifies the values of the broader society.” In other words, the church sounds pretty much like the world—and then they wonder why people have no interest. The church seems, in many cases, to ratify the world around it with religious language rather than changing it.

Years ago, I read a booklet put out by the John Birch Society called *Apostasy and the National Council of Churches*. It went into various church leaders in those churches that were involved with Communist front organizations, and there were a lot of them. I also recall a statement I heard years ago that I never forgot, partly because it was so true—“*Not many preachers become Communists, but a lot of Communists become preachers.*” If you want examples of this just check out the subject of **Liberation Theology** on some search engines.

Something else almost as bad as the apostasy are those that neutralize the church to the point where they make it almost impossible for the church to speak to the society around it or in any way engage the culture around it. I refer to some of this as the John 3:16 syndrome. There are some preachers that, no matter what text they quote for the Sunday morning sermon, the sermon always ends up being about John 3:16. Now don't misunderstand me here. John 3:16 is a wonderful biblical truth, but it is not the only Scripture verse that should ever be preached on. Unfortunately, some preachers never get past it. It seems to be the end-all of their biblical repertoire—followed by an alter call and 33 verses of “Just as I am” if no one heeds the alter call and comes forward. Most of these preachers have no idea of what goes on in the real world. They rail against “dirty politicians” but the thought never seems to occur to them that if more real Christians got involved in politics then just maybe it would not be such a dirty business. Truly informed Christians could call the politicians to repentance for much of what they do if only there were a whole batch more of them.

Then there is something else prevalent in Christian society that I refer to as the “personal holiness syndrome.” This is a mindset that stresses personal holiness but seems little concerned about cultural holiness. Again, personal holiness is good, and we should all strive for that, even though many of us, myself included,

don't always do real well at it at times. But we should continue to try. But in addition to that, we need to be concerned about the holiness, or lack thereof, of the culture around us, and to be aware of that we need to have some idea of what goes on in the culture around us, politically, educationally, and otherwise. How can you call your culture to repentance if you don't have a clue as to what goes on in Washington, or in your state capitol, or in your local public school, or in your own town hall? Christians need to be aware in all these areas, as well as in some I have not mentioned here. Just planning on how you will get to heaven does little to help or improve the culture you live in. Many will say "well, I won't be here that long anyway." And you may not be, but what about your children and grandchildren? They will be around for a while. What are you leaving for them if you do nothing?

Christians need to be informed and involved in the culture around them. Otherwise all they are doing is leaving their posterity a devil's playground to live in. This is just my two cents worth of concern for what I see going on all around me. I guess all this, and a dollar will get you a cup of coffee.