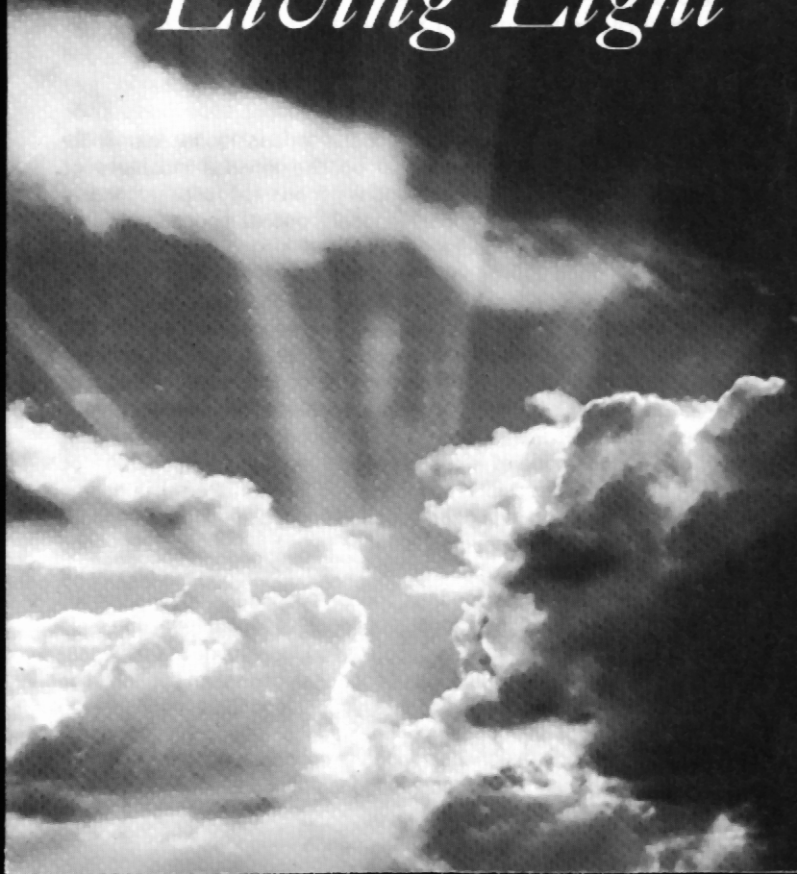


APOSTASY

*Rays of  
Living Light*



# APOSTASY

BY PRESIDENT CHARLES W. PENROSE

That there has been a great departure from the doctrines, ordinances, and discipline of the Church as it existed in the days of Christ and his Apostles, must be evident to every unbiased inquirer into religious truth. This has been demonstrated to some extent in that already presented to the reader. But the full measure of the apostasy that has taken place would take volumes to represent in detail. The proofs are ample that it has been universal.

## APOSTASY OF THE JEWS

When Jesus Christ commenced his ministry on earth he found the people who claimed to be the special subjects of divine blessing and approbation, with all their priests and ministers and learned divines, entirely out of the way of life and salvation. None were acceptable unto God. He denounced the most pious, respectable, devout and educated among them as hypocrites and "whited sepulchres." Their foreign missionary enterprises he declared obnoxious to the Almighty, and informed them that when they compassed sea and land to make one proselyte they made him "two fold more the child of hell" than themselves.<sup>1</sup> He pronounced them blind guides who made clean the outside, but within were full of extortion and excess. The Spirit of the Lord had departed from those who honored his name with their lips, but who had departed from his ways, and who, in place of the word of God, "taught for doctrine the commandments of men." They were without authority from God, although they claimed to have it by descent and ordination through a long line of predecessors and prophets. It should not be deemed impossible that a similar universal apostasy could take place after the establishment of the Church of Christ by him and his Apostles. But whether so

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 23:15.

considered or not, the facts are too patent to be denied when they confront the honest and enlightened mind.

### DOCTRINES TAUGHT BY CHRIST

It has been shown that the Gospel as taught and administered by Christ and his Apostles required, first, faith in God and Jesus Christ; second, repentance, which included reform of conduct; third, baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, the reception of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands of divinely authorized men; and that obedience to these brought the gifts of the Spirit, including love, joy, peace, patience, brotherly kindness, charity, healings, tongues, interpretations, discerning of spirits, miracles, prophecy, revelation, and the unity in one body of all who were baptized into the Church, no matter what had been their previous beliefs. Also that the ordinances of the Gospel were administered by men inspired of God, who were in communion with him, and who were ordained to act for and in behalf of Deity, so that what they performed by that authority on earth was acknowledged and sealed in heaven. And that in the Church of Christ there were apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, elders, and other officers, who were constituent parts of the body of Christ. This may be further seen by careful reading of I Cor. 12, from which it clearly appears that God placed these in the Church, that they were all essential to its existence, and that one of them could not say to any of the others, "I have no need of thee."

### PRESENT CONDITION OF CHRISTENDOM

Look at the condition of so-called Christendom today! There are no inspired apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, administering by divine authority and in the power and demonstration of the Holy Ghost. In their place there are contending priests and teachers guided

by the wisdom of men, the learning of the schools and the traditions of the fathers, not even claiming that there is any direct communication between them and God, but persuading mankind that revelation has ceased, and the voice of prophecy is hushed forever. Not one of the clashing, jarring and discordant sects of the day proclaims the Gospel as it was preached by Peter on the day of Pentecost, and as taught by the duly authorized servants of God in the primitive Christian Church. The gifts and signs which Christ promised to true believers, and which were enjoyed by the members of his Church according to their needs and their faith, are not only absent from the churches of these degenerate times, but are pronounced needless and "done away." There is no "unity of faith," no actual "knowledge of the Son of God,"<sup>2</sup> no manifestation of his divine acceptance nor of the power and glory of the Holy Ghost.

#### CAUSE OF THE EXISTING CONDITION

What is the reason of this transformation? Has God changed? Is Christ divided? Is the Holy Ghost dead? Or, have not men changed the order, ordinances, discipline, doctrines, and spirit of the Church of Christ? Is not the prediction of Isaiah the Prophet concerning these times literally fulfilled? "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." He said it should be "as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him."<sup>3</sup>

#### FORETOLD BY THE APOSTLE

The deplorable condition of affairs in modern Christen-

<sup>2</sup>Ephesians 4:12.

<sup>3</sup>Isaiah 24:2-5.

dom was foreseen and predicted by the Apostles of Jesus Christ whose forebodings have come down to us in the New Testament. Paul, writing to Timothy, spoke in this wise: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."<sup>4</sup> Also: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron."<sup>5</sup> Paul further said: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."<sup>6</sup> Paul also said they should be "ever learning, and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth."<sup>7</sup> Writing to the Thessalonians he said: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup>2 Timothy 3:1-5.

<sup>5</sup>1 Timothy 4:1-2.

<sup>6</sup>2 Timothy 4:1-4.

<sup>7</sup>2 Timothy 3:7.

<sup>8</sup>2 Thessalonians 2:1-3.

## PREDICTED BY THE APOSTLE PETER

The Apostle Peter also foresaw this great apostasy, and spoke of it in this wise: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."<sup>9</sup>

## THE FALLING AWAY IN THE TIME OF THE APOSTLES

The "falling away" commenced in the time of the Apostles, and hence their numerous warnings and exhortations to the Saints, rebuking schisms and divisions, and counseling unity, showing that the Spirit of the Lord promoted union and led people to the knowledge of the truth, while dissension and strife came from the Evil One, and led to darkness and death. That the great apostasy commenced at a very early period is shown by the words of Paul, "For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way."<sup>10</sup> By the time the Apostles were taken out of the way, most of them slain by the hands of wicked men, the apostasy had assumed such proportions that only seven of the Churches were deemed worthy of a divine communication through the Apostle John, who had been banished to the Island of Patmos. And in that revelation most of them were denounced by the Lord because they had "left their first love," and were commanded to repent or he would remove them out of their place. Some of them were "neither cold nor hot," others had given way to seducing spirits, and had committed

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<sup>9</sup>2 Peter 2:1-3.<sup>10</sup>2 Thessalonians 2:7.

abominations and imbibed false doctrines.<sup>11</sup> In that same vision John the beloved saw the Church in the form of a woman, clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head, taken away into the wilderness, to remain for a lengthened period, and in her place he saw "a woman sitting upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy," and though decked with gold and precious stones, she held in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, and the name upon her head was Mystery. He saw further that all nations were made to drink out of that golden cup, by which they were made drunken.<sup>12</sup>

### APOSTASY UNIVERSAL

It is clear from these predictions in the New Testament, and others that might be cited, that the departure from the purity, simplicity, and unity of the Gospel of Christ was to be universal; and that these prophecies were fulfilled we have the testimony of the Church of England. In her Homily on the Perils of Idolatry she declares: "Clergy and laity, learned and unlearned, men, women and children, of all ages, sects and degrees, of whole Christendom, a most horrible and dreadful thing to think have been at once buried in the most abominable idolatry and that for eight hundred years or more." That being true, how is it possible to believe that the Church of Christ had any existence on earth after that long continued darkness and apostasy? How could there be any remnant left of the divine authority held by the Apostles and Priesthood of the original Christian Church. If the Romish Church, from which the Church of England seceded, had no divine authority, then the Church of England could have none, for all she had she obtained from that Church. If the Romish Church possessed that authority, still the Church of England could have none, for Rome excommunicated her with all her priests and ministers. The Church of England being without divine authority, all

<sup>11</sup>Revelation 1, 2, 3.

<sup>12</sup>Revelation 12:1-6; 17:1-5; 18:2-3.

the various contending sects that have sprung from her are of necessity in a similar condition, for none of them even claim to have received any revelation from God restoring that authority and re-establishing the Church of Christ.

### NONE HOLDING AUTHORITY

From the Pope of Rome down to the latest minister presuming to act in the name of the Lord, there is not and cannot be one who holds the Holy Apostleship or any portion of that sacred Priesthood which God placed in the Church, and which Paul declared essential to its existence. Good men, learned men, devout men, there have been by millions; noble, pious and blessed women also with them, have done the best they could according to their light and opportunities; but darkness "has covered the earth and gross darkness the people," and apostasy from primitive Christianity, as foretold by its founders, has been awful and universal!

### A RESTORATION PREDICTED

But thank God, the restoration was also predicted, and it will be a pleasing task in further tracts to set this forth, as revealed and brought about by revelation from God the Eternal Father, through Jesus Christ his Son and the Holy Angels sent from their presence, to usher in the last and greatest of all dispensations.

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