

BASIS OF CONFLICT

By

Curtis Dickinson

Today's crisis in religion is a part of the development of the two conflicting purposes of God and Satan.

THE CONFLICT very early manifested itself in the attempted destruction of the creation of God by the temptation in Eden. God had warned that death would result for those who disobeyed Him. Satan declared, "Thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 3:4). The purpose of this lie was to persuade the pair in the garden to disobey God, knowing it would bring about their death and thus defeat the purpose of God to have a race of eternal men in His own image. Man is related to God only as he believes and acts upon the truth God reveals. Satan destroys this relationship by reversing the truth. The Bible says that Satan was "more subtle" than any other creature and that he is the one who "deceives the nations." Jesus said that "He was a murderer from the beginning and stands not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar and the father thereof" (John 8:44). Notice the connection between murder and lying. Satan's purpose is to destroy God's creatures and he employs the lie as the most effective means. The simple and direct lie has now developed into a massive system employing the complicated philosophies of politics, religion and Economics. But the purpose remains the same: to turn men from the sovereignty of God and thus bring about their destruction.

IN OUR DAY THE CONFLICT has reached such proportions as to involve whole nations and world-wide movements. The revolution attributed to Marxism is in reality the lies of Satan emerging in collective form. His deceptive power is demonstrated in the fact that the very champions of this new emerging political force are at the same time the champions of a new religious concept, which claims to have the answer to all man's problems. Deception is only deception if it really deceives. The very fact that millions of people, including religious leaders, are following this line proves the scripture that the devil is a liar and deceiver.

Outright atheism and rebellion against God is not popular in our so-called Christian nation. It is respectable to go to church. No political or religious leader would dare openly rebel against God and Christianity. But he doesn't have to in order to be on Satan's side. The deceiver has persuaded men to champion his cause under the very label of Christianity, faith and democracy. As the late Dean Inge stated, "History seems to show that the powers of evil have won their greatest triumphs by capturing the organizations which were formed to defeat them, and that, when the devil has changed the contents of the bottles, he never alters the labels. The fort may have been captured by the enemy but it still flies the flag of its defenders." In church after church the contents of the gospel have been removed and in their stead lies a popular concept of social progress. This social gospel coincides with the new concept of a socialistic political order. The

religion is used to bolster the political idea and the political idea is used to give prestige and force to the religious concept. The religion still goes under the name, "Christian". It still gives lip service to the Bible, but classifies the miracles and intervention of God as "myth" and the requirements of God as traditions subject to human change. The contents of the bottle have been changed by the deceiver, but the label remains the same. The fort has been taken over by the enemy, and now millions of people are actually defending the citadel of Satan because his fort still flies the flag of truth!

THE SCRIPTURE PREDICTED THIS. Paul warned that Satan would gain power through "deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish: because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10). This deception was to be so complete that the whole world would voluntarily accept the false religious-political system, now enveloping the earth. "And the whole earth wondered after the beast; and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, who is like unto the beast? And who is able to war with him?" (Rev. 13:3-4). Here the dragon refers to Satan and the beast refers to a world-wide political tyranny. That this power is to be gained by deception is clearly stated in verse 14: "And he deceived them that dwell on the earth." The object in view: destruction of the race. The means to the end: lies.

What better way to deceive religious men than to suggest they support a world-wide movement for church unity and for political reforms? This is exactly what is being done by the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches and the Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church. The argument is made that we cannot divorce our religion from our social obligations. Of course this is true. The deception is in that the social reforms being pressured by religious groups are actually not conducive to the Sovereignty of God, but are chains that restrict freedom and force all men into a socialist government where they give their substance and allegiance to the state, and the state takes charge of charity for the sake of its own ends. The result of the process is that the state becomes sovereign. Thus through the deceptive aid of a false church Satan hopes to reach a place of sovereignty over the human race.

THE CONFLICT BECOMES A struggle of the individual to remain free from the entanglements of institutions, whether political or religious, in order to give his allegiance solely to God, his Creator and Sovereign Master. The struggle is intensified by the fact that many on the side of Satan are sincerely convinced that they are on the right and that all resistance to their effort is resistance to God. Jesus said, "The hour cometh, that whosoever kills you shall think that he offers service unto God" (John 16:2). There is less and less resistance to Satan's power simply because men are reluctant to oppose their own organizations, their own churches, their own parties and their own neighbors. The deception of Satan has been made easier in our generation because of the abysmal ignorance of the truth of God. It is never easy to hold the truth in the face of the most subtle artist of deception in all creation. It is impossible to hold the truth when one never knew it in the first place.

As the world bows lower and lower to Satan's rule, under the disguise of "humanity", it will become more difficult to withstand the pressure of conforming to it. Already, those who oppose the system are branded. The more active ones are ridiculed in the news media and the quieter ones are politely passed over. Many are not taking the trouble to consider the ultimate consequences of joining the obvious majority. It is easier to join than resist, and so by their weakness they help to accelerate the rise of a force in the world that rejects the sovereignty of God, in the name of God.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CHRISTIAN in this conflict?

FIRST we must recognize that the conflict exists. The Satanic order seeks to obscure the fact of the conflict and defeat the Christian under the camouflage of neutrality. The appearance of peace may only mean that Satan has gained control of the fort. The Christian must be unafraid to wage warfare against the "principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:12-13).

SECOND, we must recognize that this is a struggle between the TRUTH of God and the lies of Satan. For more than a century Satan has concentrated his attack upon the Bible, until at last we have produced a generation which either rejects the Bible as the revelation from God, or else is ignorant of what the Bible really says. The essential element in a relationship to God is the truth which He reveals about Himself and about His will for man. If Satan uses lies and deception to destroy this relationship, we must know the truth in order to sustain the relationship. In a circumstance where one may have to stand alone in resistance to the world it is necessary that he stand in harmony with the God who is his Helper. This can be done only by knowing what God has revealed in His word. "Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth" (Ephesians 6:14). The truth will not be attained by merely attending the routine meetings of the church and reading the Sunday school quarterly. One must make some very special effort on his own to read and digest the purpose, commands and promises in the Book God has given us.

THIRD, we must follow the instructions given in Revelation 18:4, for just such a time as this. "Come forth, my people, out of her, that you have no fellowship with her sins and that you receive not of her plagues." Of course one cannot go apart from the world, but one can refuse to walk in the idolatrous direction it is taking. This means one may often have to sacrifice the approval of his fellow men in order to resist the growing system of Satan. One is tempted to look for comfort and strength in a unity of men, which is Satan's intention. But the real comfort and power is in a unity with God.

FOURTH, we must remember what the outcome of the conflict will be. God, the Creator of all things, will not be thwarted. In Thessalonians 2:8 the end of Satan's force is revealed: "And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of His coming." While the Christians must endure the tribulations wrought by satanic forces, he will be sustained by God until the coming of Christ. Ultimately God will prevail. In His new creation there will be a unity; not brought about by a human totalitarian rule as the result

of coercive socialism, but a unity brought about by accepting and living according to the truth of Cod as revealed in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

JUST FOR YOU–TH

Our YOUTH article this month is written by Miss Carol Houser, of Fowler, Kansas.

“But when the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he roams through dry places in search of rest, but he does not find any. Then he says, ‘I will go back to my house from which I came out.’ And when he arrives he finds the place unoccupied, swept, put in order and decorated. Then he goes and brings with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they go in and make their home there. And the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first” (Matthew 12:43-45).

Many of us have decided to lead Christian lives. One of the first things we do after making this decision is to try to remove as much evil from our lives as possible. We also try to give more time to church attendance. After cleaning up our lives and jumping into the middle of church activity we consider our witness for the Lord pretty well in hand, so we continue to coast along with the church crowd without ever stopping to really take a good look at ourselves.

So we’ve cleaned up our house and put it in order. Have we really replaced the unclean spirits with the Spirit of God? Have we really turned over the keys and the management to Christ? Does He really guide each moment of each day for us or do we take it for granted because we’re caught up in a stream of good habits? Let each examine one’s own self according to the scriptures.

“Not every one who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

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