

Politician? or Paulician?

Alan Burns (?-1929)

The term “Paulician”¹ may be misunderstood, especially if it be taken to represent an “*I am of Paul*” sectarianism. When even “*I am of Christ*” is frowned upon by the great apostle as being sectarian and heretical, we may well be assured that such a caste usage of it is nothing but a form of wretched religious snobbery. However, we cannot find a better term to distinguish the gold from the tinsel in modern Christendom than by using this word to describe those who have shared Paul’s knowledge of the divine mysteries and adopted Paul’s attitude toward the world movements.

“*The gospel of the kingdom*” has its *political* elements, for the kingdom of which it treats is a real kingdom, with a real King, a real capital, a real government, a real law, and is, in fact, not only as *real* as but *more real* than the kingdom of Great Britain today. Because of this, whatever fractional portion of the kingdom gospel can be made to apply to the political theories of the modern *social church*, is taken and tortured into seeming acquiescence with them. Yet in order to do so a very vital ingredient of the kingdom gospel is kept out, viz., its eschatology. The ethics of the kingdom gospel, such ethics as may be found in the Sermon on the Mount, and representing an intensification of the Mosaic law’s demand for perfection, condemns rather than saves the man who will try to climb up to heaven on the ladder of the Beatitudes. What man needed was not a demand but a supply, and even a golden-runged ladder is of no avail to one crippled from birth. It may then be suggested that when the modern church takes the ethics and refuses the eschatology of “*the gospel of the kingdom*” it embraces the part that, of itself alone, condemns and repudiates the very portion, or ingredient, that contains the hope of salvation.

If the Law on the Mount through Moses was a *political* failure in bringing in *social* righteousness, because of the unspiritual state of the nation to which it was given, then surely the Law on the Mount through Christ would be a greater *political* failure if given to the Gentiles which we know it was not.

Lot still is seated by Sodom’s gate, and his sons of today have the *social gospel* of their ancient

1. In past issues of the *Bible Student’s Notebook* we have carried information regarding the Paulicians. These were believers who lived outside of the religious system. They were called “Paulicians” by their adversaries due to their emphasis upon Paul’s epistles. The reader is encouraged to review this material in *Brief Notes on Church History – Part II* (**BSN** #29), *Whatever Happened to the Paulicians* by E.W. Bullinger (**BSN** #44), and *Paulicians: Additional Historical Information* (**BSN** #77).

sire, for the time is not yet ripe for the taunt to be hurled “*This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge*” (Genesis 19:9). Lot had no gospel for the people of Sodom nor did he possess any divine authority whatever to mingle with their *political* gatherings, but he apparently found an easy seat and an uneasy conscience when he associated with the city’s elders at the gate. The “church” of today has, in its Bible, a gospel for the world, yet we find it in the role of a law-maker rather than a gospel preacher. Its preachers are trying to make citizens when they should be seeking to edify saints.

The saints of God are *aliens* here on earth. Let that sink in. No believer, as such, can be a Republican, for in his heart he believes in and is related to a kingdom. Republicanism is merely political Arminianism – it believes in human ability in some form. How can a rejected king become a member of a rebellious republic? If Christ be the King, forget not that we are His body. Individually we may be ambassadors entreating the world to be conciliated to God, but does England’s ambassador to the United States vote? Can any ambassador legislate in the country to which he is sent? Of course not. Ambassadors come in to “*sojourn*” like Lot, and but few, if any, are guilty of making Lot’s mistake.

How many of God’s people have failed to see that if you exercise a citizen’s privileges in the time of peace you must honorably fulfill a citizen’s duties in the time of war! Ballots and bayonets are logically united: the ballot is the means whereby the majority makes law for the minority; and the bayonet is the weapon whereby the strong make law for the weak. You can no more preach the gospel with a ballot than you can with the point of a bayonet, but if as a citizen you claim the privilege of using the former do not be surprised if your fellow-citizens expect you to face the duty of employing the latter.

Paul was no politician. Once, it is true, he claimed Roman citizenship, but see what happened thereafter. The events that followed after he claimed his “rights” quickly led to a conclusion of the preaching of the kingdom of God. If, as a Roman citizen, he received Roman protection for a season, it is also true that as a Roman citizen he was put into a Roman prison, and ultimately as a Roman citizen suffered from the stroke of a Roman sword.

Paul had no political program. The cross put an end to man in the flesh. It assessed the natural man and declared him bankrupt. Bankrupt politically, morally, spiritually, totally. Instead of being a citizen of the world he became a corpse in it: “*I am crucified with Christ.*” As far as the world is concerned, the church of God is a cemetery full of nothing but dead men, and men with their names on tombstones do not run for political nominations.

The religious world of today prates much and often of the glories of “democracy;” yet the believer’s hope is centered not in democracy but in Theocracy, not in man-ocracy but God-ocracy. If the reader is a “Paulician,” or has learned the truth of Paul’s epistles, he will not claim to be either a Republican, a Democrat, or a Socialist, for God’s choice and not his, God’s vote and not his ballot has made him a member of the Theocratic party by the grace of God. “*Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world*” (II Timothy 4:10) would correctly describe the modern religious political attitude toward Paul’s theocratic teaching.

Whitewashing the world is – alas! – the occupation of a “church” which should have learned by now that what the world needs is to be washed white. The whitewash may be applied now with this brush and then with that; but the “church” which thus would gloss over, and patch up, and do a tinkerer’s job with a world whose disease is in its nature, and whose evils spring from its constitution, has repudiated the cross of Christ, the Theocratic hope of the Scriptures, God’s way of dealing with the world’s sin, and has become merely a political club instead of a Paulician church.

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