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Apostasy Then and Now

"They shall go ... to seek Jehovah; but they shall not find Him: He hath withdrawn Himself from them (...). The princes of Judah are become like them that remove the landmark: I will pour out My wrath upon them like water."

"So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth."

Hosea 5:6, 10; Revelation 3:14-22

With these words the Lord addresses Israel's priests and princes. Yet His very reprimanding Israel shows how much He cares for His people. If He were indifferent, would He still challenge them about their relationship with Him?

God charges the leaders with shifting the boundaries. The drift from what is of God into what is of man was the bane of Israel. Their priests and princes fell into corrupting practices that would lead into apostasy (v. 2). There was no return from it, for they became void of any knowledge of God (v. 4). They sought to lead their flock back to God, but without giving up their practices, so they did not succeed; God had withdrawn Himself from them. Yes, God will severely chastise His people until they return to Him in genuine repentance (v. 15).

Israel's story contains a needed warning for every Christian congregation, for Christendom's history is not much different. There, too, leaders present their own ideas, which the "flock" blindly follows due to a lack of knowledge of God's mind. The Lord may bear with such decline for a while and plead for a return to Him, but eventually He will withdraw Himself, and not allow Himself to be found even if they seek Him. He will spew them out of His mouth (Rev. 3:14-22).

Just as clearly as it describes Israel's end as an independent nation, so God's Word describes the end of the professing Church. Like Ephraim in Hosea's days, who went to Assyria for help, so many today seek for spiritual enlightenment, not in God's Word but in false religions. May we not give God cause to go away!

