

## THE FIFTH COLUMN IN THE CHURCH

When in 1936 Francisco Franco led his uprising against the Spanish Republic, four columns of soldiers besieged Madrid. When asked how he hoped to capture the capital with so few troops, Gen. Mola responded that he had a “fifth column” within the city who were supporting his efforts. That fifth column were those citizens of the city who were sympathetic to Franco’s rebellion.\* With their help the rebels overthrew the government and gained control of the nation. Thus has come down to us the epithet “Fifth Column.”

The church has always been a city under siege by the enemies of Christ. In most generations there has been a fifth column within her walls more than willing to embrace the enemy. We can understand atheists, infidels, hedonists, corrupt and evil sinners of every kind and sectarians who hate the church. The thing that is baffling is that element in our fellowship who hold the church in contempt and devote themselves to her undoing.

Ensnared in many of our Christian Schools and in numerous pulpits of our churches are a band of men who have no sense of loyalty to the Christ or his church. They labor to convince gullible young Christians that the church has failed, that the lessons they have learned are not the message of Christ. They tell them Christ has many churches (denominations) and that good people can be saved without the necessity of baptism. They plant doubts and questions in their minds and sow discontent. They turn younger members against the older leaders of their congregations. They seek to discredit great Christian leaders of past generations. They encourage worldly women to aspire for leadership roles in the public life of the church. They urge brethren to venture out and participate in fellowship activities with other religious bodies who are in competition with Christ. They foment strife in congregations that often results in chaos and division.

While the open and alleged enemies of the church attack from without, this fifth column works to weaken resistance from within. In many cases naive elders and preachers have no idea that these traitors are at work within their congregations. When the conflict finally erupts they are shocked to find that their position has been undermined and they are outnumbered. Their only options are surrender and join them or admit defeat and leave. Wise shepherds know their flock. They inform themselves about problems within and without their congregations. Left unhindered a fifth column can be responsible for the capture of a church by the forces of error. JHW

\* Thanks to LaGard Smith for this information (**Sodom’s Second Coming**, p. 154).