

# Chapter 9

## THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION DOCTRINE

*Who initiated the Apostolic Succession doctrine?  
How did this doctrine evolve?*

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The doctrine of Apostolic Succession is based on the writing of *Matthew*, one of the four, to whom Christ entrusted the script of the gospel.

*Matthew 28:19 "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..."*

[New Catholic Holy Bible, Confraternity-Due Version]

*Matthew 28:19 "Go you therefore, and make disciples of all the nations..."*

[American Standard Version]

*Matthew 28:19 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations..."*

[New International Version]

*Matthew 28:19 "Therefore go and make disciples in all nations*

[Living Bible]

Plus many more Bible versions having the same phrase, "make disciples," purportedly giving authority to church leaders "to choose, train, and appoint" fellow apostles of Christ. Failing to notice is what *Mark* wrote regarding the same subject, under the same Bible versions:

*Mark 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature."*

[New Catholic Holy Bible, Confraternity-Douay Version]

*Mark 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation.*  
[American Standard Version]

*Mark 16:15 "He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*  
[New International Version]

*Mark 16:15 "And he told them, You are to go into all the world and preach the good news to everyone..."*  
[Living Bible]

Who would judge between *Matthew* and *Mark* receiving the right instruction from Jesus Christ? The King James Version of 1611, or Authorized Version, has the following:

*Matthew 28:19 "Go you therefore, and teach all nations..."*

*Mark 16:15 "And he said unto them, Go ye into the entire world, and preach the gospel to every creature."*

Maybe many people would say "the majority should prevail." While this is true in other matters, to God, being the Judge, He gives the answer by "demonstration." This is fully illustrated in Chapter 8: GOD'S SERVANTS and CHRIST'S APOSTLES.

Perhaps modern apostles of Christ cannot admit that the Apostolic Succession doctrine evolved as a religious tradition. And, maybe they are not even aware that the doctrine is based on human reasoning, a product of philosophy that appeals to the emotion. History records its development. The following is an excerpt of its account (Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 26, page 512-514, 1967 edition):

"After the 2nd century...special schools for the clergy were established. Such schools arose in Alexandria and Antioch in the 3rd century. In his book on Christian doctrine (De doctrina Christiana) St. Augustine provided a fully rounded theory of clerical training. The Synod of Vaison (529 A.D.) determined that in Spain and Gaul bishops should train suitable candidates for the priesthood in the episcopal residence. At the Synod of Aachen (AD 789), Charlemagne prescribed that priests should know at least the Creed, the

Lord's Prayer, and the Penitentials by heart. Later decrees of the Church demanded detailed study of the Latin fathers and of significant liturgical works. However, throughout the Middle Ages, despite the brilliant work of the universities, large numbers of priests were ill-trained.

*Roman Catholic:* The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century stimulated the Roman Catholic Church into renewed activity regarding requirements for the training of its clergy. The Council of Trent, in its decree of July 15, 1563, urged bishops to establish ecclesiastical seminaries for the training of priests.

Candidates for admission to the theological seminary have usually completed the course of one of the minor seminaries, or they must offer a Bachelor of Arts degree from some college of recognized standing, or a satisfactory equivalent. The first two years are devoted to logic, ontology, psychology, natural theology, church history, general history, Latin, Hebrew, Greek, physics, biology, and chemistry. These two years are designed to furnish a sufficient preparation for the rigorous and intensive study of theological subjects of the following four years. The subjects studied during this second period are apologetics (an exposition and defense of the grounds of Roman Catholic beliefs), dogmatic and moral theology, pastoral theology, homiletics, canon law, church history, and Biblical exegesis. Sociology is offered to provide students an opportunity to secure a thorough knowledge of modern social and economic problems and movements. By constant participation in the ritual, the young priest is trained to the proper administration of the church's sacraments."

*Eastern Orthodox:* For centuries the monasteries of the Eastern Church, like those of the Roman Catholic Church in the West, were centers of theological reflection and study. Dating from AD 936, the monasteries on Mount Athos in Greek Macedonia are among the most ancient of these focal points of Orthodox piety, learning, and iconographic art. The early Orthodox monks copied manuscripts, collected books, and often maintained schools. They also furnished the bishops of Orthodoxy and were the group's most zealous defenders.

With the erection of the Patriarchate of Moscow in 1589, Orthodoxy's center of ecclesiastical jurisdiction shifted from Constantinople to Moscow. Although the higher<sup>1</sup> clergy was generally well educated, with some of the more advanced clergy since the Protestant Reformation studying at Italian, British, and German universities, most of the Russian Orthodox priests lacked adequate training. The priesthood was often handed down from father to son, with the father teaching his son the priestly craft.

When Czar Peter I (the Great) enacted the Clerical Regulations in 1721, he decreed that clerical schools be organized. As a result, by the end of the 18th century, Russia had three academies for advanced theological study and 36 seminaries for the education of the general clergy. Czar Alexander I ordered a reorganization of theological education in 1808 and still another in 1814. Prior to their closing in 1918, there were in Russia four Orthodox faculties: at Kiev (founded in 1632), Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kazan. There were also 57 seminaries and 185 preparatory schools."

*Other Sects:* The Reformation, with its emphasis on the removal of religious abuses and on the Scriptures as the supreme rule of faith, lent itself naturally to a reform of theological education. Its leaders, Martin Luther (1483-1546), Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), Philip Melancthon (1497-1560), John Calvin (1509-1564), and Thomas Crammer (1489-1556), were all university men. It was logical that men such as these should concern themselves with a wider range of education. The Protestant minister – essentially a preacher rather than a priest – had to acquire a solid theological education.

Wittenberg University, where Luther had received his education in the arts and theology, became an international training school for Lutheran preachers, and the Lutheran Marburg University, founded 1527, and was the first European school of higher learning to be established without papal privilege. Calvin's followers received the most thoroughgoing discipline in the Academy of Geneva

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<sup>1</sup> Encyclopedia Americana., Vol. 26, Page 513, 1967 Edition

(founded in 1558 and the parent of the modern University of Geneva), and in schools at Names, Sedan, Saumur, and Montauban, all in France.”

Excerpts from Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 26, Page 514, 1967 Edition

“Despite the high ideals of the reformers for a well-trained ministry, progress was slow...The development of Lutheran High Orthodoxy, with its concern for doctrinal refinement, demanded a more adequate training. In the 17th century the Pietism movement, led by Philip Spencer (1635-1705) stressed inwardness, spirituality, and practicality in the training of pastors. Yale University, founded in 1694 (amalgamated with Wittenberg University in 1817), became the chief center of the Pietists.

Interest in textual, literary-critical, and historical studies of the Bible became dominant in Protestantism generally after 1750, and the enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries gave an impetus to the study of scientific theology and church history.

Since 1800 the theological training of European Protestant pastors, both Lutheran and Reformed, has been fairly uniform. Graduation from a classical *gymnasium*, with a course of seven to nine years, is prerequisite to admission as a student in the theological faculties of the state universities in the Scandinavian countries, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. The theological course extends through four years. In addition, post university training in practical subjects, including liturgics, catechetics, religious education, and pastoral care, is given in practical seminaries. This training last from six months to two years. In 1948 the Evangelical Church of Wurttemberg introduced an ecclesiastical year of service (Kirchliches Dienstjahr) in which every aspiring theological student must devote one year to practical work before entering professional studies. One half year of this work must be spent on some home mission project; the other half year in industry. This venture is designed to supplement the one sided academic training so characteristic of the education of most Continental divinity students.

In England and Scotland the centers of theological learning have for centuries been the universities. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 excluded Dissenters (Nonconformists) from established universities. As a result, the Nonconformists founded their own schools, including academies at Warrington, Northampton, Hoxton, Hackney, Tewkesbury, Kendall, Exeter, and Stoke Newington. The Presbyterians were leaders in establishing this type of theological school, the development of which last for over 150 years. English Baptists established Bristol Academy (now Baptist College) in 1679...

In the United States, schools for the training of an intelligent citizenry and ministry were established soon after the settlement of the North American colonies. Harvard College was founded in 1636, Yale College in 1701, the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) in 1746, and Rhode Island College (now Brown) in 1765. These colleges – originally Congregational (Harvard and Yale), Presbyterian (Princeton), and Baptist (Brown) – were created primarily for the training of ministers."

Man devised means to acquire "divine" knowledge. He imparts this to a chosen few he calls apostles of Christ. He formulated a branch of learning and called it *Theology* to execute this plan. The following are open pages of history books (Encyclopedia Americana, Vol. 26, page 516-518, 1967 edition):

"Theology is a term compounded of two Greek words, Theos (God) and logos (rational utterance), and it might be taken to mean something like 'rational utterance, or discourse about God, or gods.' The term first appears in Plato's Republic (book ii, chapter 18) with reference to poetry. According to Plato norms must be prescribed to which the poetry must conform in matters of theology. In this connection theology means the telling of stories about the gods. In Aristotle's metaphysics (book VI, chapter 1, sect. 19), it is one of the three speculative sciences: mathematical, physical, and theological. Here theology corresponds roughly to what we mean by metaphysics. Marcus Terentius Varro, probably following the Stoic philosopher Panaetius, divided theology into three concepts: mythical, natural (or physical), and civil (or political). Mythical theology was concerned with the myths about the gods and the doctrines implied in them; political theology with the descriptions of

the rites and of the religious practices of various cities or states; and natural theology was the science of divinity, the proper occupation of philosophers.

In the ancient church, Gregory of Nazianzus (4th century A.D.), in his treatise *De theologia* (Oratio 28), was concerned with the knowledge of God. The word was also used for the predication of divinity and in particular for the doctrine of the *Trinity* and of the divinity of Christ. According to Theodore of Cyrrhus (5th century A.D.) it meant the Old and New Testaments, a usage which we can link up with the pagan Greek mythical theology mentioned above.

In the West down to the time of Abelard (1079-1142), the term 'theology' was associated with heathenism. Abelard changed the meaning of the word. For him theology was as much the study of the Christian doctrine of God displayed in the Holy Scripture and the church fathers, as the doctrines of God found in writers outside the Bible and the church. With this use, the modern history of the term begins. Thus in the Oxford English Dictionary theology can be defined as follows: 'The study or science which treats of God, His nature and attributes, and His relations with man and the universe.' This definition we can take as the starting point of our account of what is meant by theology."

Contents of Christian Theology. – Having confined ourselves in principle to the theology of one tradition, we next have to determine its content more precisely. We can mean by theology narrowly a doctrine of God in Himself, a whole body of doctrine, or the study of such a body of doctrine with the literature in which it is contained. This last meaning of the term can be illustrated from its use in the curricula of modern universities which have faculties of theology. In these universities theology will cover the study of the Bible, of the important patristic texts and Reformation documents, as well as the works of modern theologians. It will use the textual, linguistic, literary, and historical disciplines even though its aim is to describe and analyze the doctrines contained in the various works under examination. In addition it will make provision for liturgy, ethics, philosophy of religion, and even the comparative study of religions. Despite this wide range of disciplines, which incidentally

makes theology an admirable educational tool, the subject even in academic syllabi retains its unity.”

If we reflect on such a syllabus we find that we can divide theology into the following branches:

*Biblical Theology* – This will cover the doctrines of the Bible as well as the disciplines ancillary to their study.

*Dogmatic Theology* – Dogma is the body of doctrine which has been approved by the Christian church. It is concerned with the distinctive Christian doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, the church, the sacraments, and the Last Things. Symbolic theology, which in practice may be regarded as equivalent to dogmatic theology, is concerned with creedal documents ecumenically received.

*Moral Theology* – This, sometimes known as Christian ethics, treats of Christian conduct. Casuistry is that part of moral theology concerned with problems of conduct and the principles involved in their solution.

*Pastoral Theology* – In defining pastoral theology we have to preserve the distinction between theology and religion. If we define pastoral theology as the cure of souls, we are, contrary to this distinction, identifying a branch of theology with an activity of religion. Accordingly pastoral theology is concerned with those beliefs and assumptions which lie behind the practice of the cure of souls. With pastoral theology may be associated ascetical theology. This is the theology of the education or training of the soul and differs from pastoral theology only in the greater stress on the element of discipline or self-discipline.

*Mystical Theology* – This is the theology of the intercourse of the soul with God.

*Liturgical Theology* – This is the theology of worship.

*Philosophical Theology* – This treats of the philosophical treatment of reality on the assumption that God is part of reality.

*Other Divisions.* – While Canon Law is not properly a branch of theology it has a theological basis which may be said to constitute its theology.

Certain studies such as church history and patristics are included under theology but themselves are not theological. They serve the ends of theology, in particular the history of doctrines and the study of doctrinal texts.

*Periods of Historical Theology* – Just as we can talk of branches in theology, so we can refer to periods in its history. Thus we can distinguish the Biblical Theology of the ages before the Incarnation, that of the New Testament, the ancient church, the medieval church, the Reformation and modern times. Such divisions are largely creatures of convenience and must not be allowed to conceal the real continuity of doctrinal history. As an illustration of such continuity we may take certain features of the doctrine of God and Messianic doctrine. In the Old Testament behind the various forms of such doctrines, we may discover two analyses of society. According to one, a simple society consists of two elements, God and people. According to the other, a more complex view, society consists of God, king, people, city, land. In the former view it is God Himself who is the Messianic figure; in the latter view the king is Messiah, a being less<sup>2</sup> than God and greater than his people. *Trinitarian* theology, where the Messianic Son is within the godhead and equal with His Father, touching His divinity, is in line with the former view. Subordinationist Christology and *Arianism*, where the Messianic figure is Son but outside God and less than God though greater than man, is in line with the second. This example displays the continuity of the theology of the Old Testament, the New Testament and the ancient church.

It can also be made to demonstrate the coherence of the various branches of theology. As we have just seen, in the *Trinity* the Son who becomes man, is equal with the Father touching His Godhead, but in *Arianism* the Son is being less than the Father and more than man. From these differences in their doctrine of God, it is expected that *Trinitarian Theology* and *Arianism* would develop different *Christologies*. So it turned out and the Christology of Arianism is coherent with its doctrine of God, orthodox Christology is coherent with the doctrine of the Trinity.

*Data of Theology.* – Clement C. J. Webb has written of ‘theology as the science of religious experience.’ By ‘religious experience’ we understand the religious experience of ourselves and others...

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<sup>2</sup> Encyclopedia Americana., Vol. 26, Page 518, 1967 Edition

After our own religious experience, much of the Bible is generally recognized, but the Bible is not the sole source of theological data apart from the religious experience of the individual theologian...

As the authority of the Bible varies, so does that of Christian theological literature among Christian theologians. In addition, there are considerable differences between the various parts of this literature in the authority they enjoy even with the same theologian."

We have seen how man, over the centuries, has fashioned a system of learning for the development of a body of knowledge about God which he calls *Theology*.

Man has worked very hard for centuries looking for worthy apostles of Christ who will spread the gospel to all nations. He devised a system for screening prospective apostles of Christ. Candidates are selected on the basis of: intelligence quotient (I.Q.), aptitude, no history of mental disorder, good moral character, and in some cases, social standing. Satisfaction of academic requirements is a prerequisite to the formal admission into the apostleship profession. This takes a period from four (4) to twelve (12) years, and even extending to twenty (20) years in special cases.

This is man's way of choosing God's servants and Christ's apostles, which has been adopted by all religious sects and denominations composing *Christianity Today*. The men chosen must be very attractive, indeed, considering their extraordinary qualifications and training. The "gospel of the kingdom" is being spread by these men, as our Lord said in:

*Matthew 24:14 "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the entire world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."*

This is being fulfilled before our eyes by Christ's apostles taught and trained, and commissioned as such, by men of authority. This is made possible by the application of the generally accepted doctrine of Apostolic Succession.

On the basis of the word of God found in the Holy Bible, this great effort of man is not in line with what is written therein. Can man find Bible support for the need for this effort? Is it not written in the Holy Scripture that knowledge and wisdom about God all originate from and are provided by Him? Does it need great human talents and resources for its development and accumulation?

Wittingly or unwittingly, in the process, man had been drawn to the dogmatic Doctrine of Apostolic Succession. Can man honestly say that he can find Bible support for it?

1. Can man find Scriptural basis for this practice of training prospective apostles of Christ?<sup>3</sup>
2. Can man accept that, if God was able to teach His chosen messengers in the Old Testament time; if the Holy Spirit was able to teach the original chosen apostles of Christ; if the invisible Christ had appointed Paul and taught him by divine revelation; can not God and Jesus Christ do this in our time? Is it impossible for God to continue what He had begun?
3. If man cannot believe, much more accept, that God can choose His chosen servants because man cannot see Him, nor talk to Him directly, does his assertion of faith and trust in God backed up by deeds?
4. For man's resistance to the divine truth that the invisible Christ is the sole authority to appoint "apostles, evangelists, prophets, pastors, and teachers,"<sup>4</sup> can he be considered "*converted into a little child*," which Jesus said is a prerequisite to entering the kingdom of God?<sup>5</sup>
5. Does not man appear, with his adherence to the unscriptural Doctrine of Apostolic Succession, to be out of the "way" and not passing through the "door?" Therefore, what is he?

*John 10:1 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entirety not by the door...but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber."*

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<sup>3</sup> Galatians 1:11 "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. <sup>12</sup> For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

<sup>1</sup> John 2:27 "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie..."

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 4:11 "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 18:3 "And Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

*John 10:9 "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved..."*

*John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth..."*

## IN SEARCH OF A "KING" AND PASTORAL SYSTEM IN PROPHECY

The people's wish:

*1 Samuel 8:1-9 "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel... <sup>3</sup>And his sons walked not in his ways... <sup>4</sup>Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel... <sup>5</sup>And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. <sup>6</sup>but the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. <sup>7</sup>And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them... <sup>9</sup>Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.*

God's warning:

*1 Samuel 8:10-21 "And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king. <sup>11</sup>And he said, this will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you... <sup>15</sup>And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants... <sup>17</sup>He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. <sup>18</sup>And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. <sup>19</sup>nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; <sup>20</sup>That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us... <sup>21</sup>And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD."*

## PROPHECY IN PARABLE

The Pastoral System is depicted in a parable about trees looking for a king. Here is the proof that no man can explain the parable of God but Him alone through His words.

*Judge 9:8-15 "The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. <sup>9</sup>But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? <sup>10</sup>And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. <sup>11</sup>But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? <sup>12</sup>Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. <sup>13</sup>And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? <sup>14</sup>Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. <sup>15</sup>And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow..."*

Has anybody ventured to explain the parable? It is Jesus Christ Who explained the parables to His disciples. The disciples by themselves could not have understood the great message of the word of God:

*Mark 4:34 "But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples."*

## THE OLIVE TREE REFUSES TO BE KING

Can man's effort, time, capability and everything in him, sufficient to comprehend God's words without Him revealing the great message? In our case, we simply ask God, and putting our trust in Him, we wait for His explanation. We ask Him, "Lord, to us an olive tree belongs to the plant kingdom that produces oil. To take your word literally, it is foolishness for this tree to be offered this position as king. We know you are speaking a language different from our literal-physical understanding. What is an olive tree to you?" As if God is saying, "How do you perceive an olive tree in the following?"

*Psalms 52:8 "But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever."*

*"Have you noticed that the olive tree is in My house? He must therefore be My chosen. Could My chosen, knowing My will, accept the position of "kingship" among his fellowmen? Remember trees symbolize people.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, no one among them would accept the position! That is where you find the olive tree refusing the position of "king," or Ruler, or Chief, or Head, or Leader, or Guide, or Director, or Teacher, or Rabbi, or Master, or Shepherd, or Pastor who has to take My place and appropriate for him the honor and glory that only belong to Me. Not only in the Old Testament books where you find olive trees symbolizing My chosen."*

*Romans 11:17 "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree."*

*"Now you know when I am talking of wild olive trees, I am referring to the Gentiles who believe in Me and, thus, becoming My chosen also."*

*Galatians 3:29 "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*

*"No one among My chosen who has the truth will ever accept the position of 'king among the trees!' Thus, the refusal of the olive tree 'who' said, 'Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?'"*

*"By this time, you must have known that 'fatness of the olive tree' refers to spiritual oil that symbolizes the Holy Spirit! Were not My chosen anointed with 'oil' or Holy Spirit? In what way does 'fatness or oil in the olive tree honor God and man? You must have been familiar with the fruit(s) of the Holy Spirit that renders honor both to Me and to men:*

*Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,<sup>23</sup> meekness, temperance..."*

## **FIG TREE REFUSES TO BE KING**

After the olive tree, the trees went to the fig tree and offered the position. The fig tree replied:

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<sup>6</sup> Matthew 7:18 "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."

*Judges 9:11 "But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?"*

In like manner, we ask God what He meant by the fig tree refusing to be king among the trees. "Lord, to us a fig tree is a literal tree that produces sweet fruits. We are now waiting for your explanation of the parable." As if God is saying, "Look for yourself if the fig tree in the following refers to a literal tree."

*Hosea 9:10 "...I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time..."*

God referred to His chosen as fig tree. As if God is saying, "The fig tree, like the olive tree, rejected the position. Will My chosen, symbolized here by the fig tree, forsake their sweetness and their good fruit in exchange for the position of 'king?' My chosen have the sweetness of My words as their satisfaction and joy."

*Psalms 119:103 "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"*

*Psalms 56:10 "In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word."*

*"Can contentment from the sweetness of My words be traded for the glory of the position as "king?" Whose exclusive possession does honor and glory belong anyway? Do you not know that Lucifer tried to grab that from Me?<sup>7</sup> Don't ever confuse honor and glory in spiritual matters from honor and glory in political, social, economic, scientific, and other matters. Honor and glory in spiritual matters solely belong to Me! That is why I never allow anyone appropriating the titles: Father and Rabbi [or Teacher or lord or Head or Chief or Leader or Pastor or Master or Shepherd] or any title that distinguishes one from the rest. Remember, to Me, My chosen are all 'brethren'.<sup>8</sup> Whoever among them whom I endowed with knowledge, and speak for Me, does not go with it the honor and glory. Has any among My Apostles ever appropriated these honorific titles? Did they grab the honor that solely belongs to Me? To My Disciples, Peter, John, and James were looked up as "pillars of the Church." But to me they are all equal.*

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<sup>7</sup> Ezekiel 28:2 "...Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart *is* lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit *in* the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou *art* a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God."

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 23:8 "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and *all ye are brethren*."

*Galatians 2:9 "And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."*

*As a matter of fact, to show their wrong impression on these Apostles I showed them how weak they were as with all of them. Did I not rebuke Peter several times for his spiritual blunder?*

*Matthew 16:23 "But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."*

*Did I not rebuke John and James for looking at themselves above the rest, and this even became an offense to their brethren?*

*Mark 10:35-41 "And James and John...come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. <sup>36</sup>And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? <sup>37</sup>They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. <sup>38</sup>But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask... <sup>41</sup>And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John."*

All these things we find in the Pastoral System where sect leaders, and some people, feel above the rest and the members look up at them. Ever since, God has been warning His people of this erroneous practice. But because of spiritual blindness, the religious people during the time of Christ practiced the system. That is when we find Jesus Christ rebuking their leaders:

*Matthew 23:2-9 "Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat... <sup>5</sup>But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, <sup>6</sup>And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup>And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. <sup>8</sup>But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. <sup>9</sup>And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven."*

## THE VINE REFUSES TO BE KING

*Judges 9:12 "Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. <sup>13</sup>And the vine said unto them, should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"*

To the Natural Man, a vine simply refers to the literal shrub that produces grapes from which wine is made after fermentation. We know, however, that God is speaking His *Spiritual Language*. It is only He Who can explain everything about His words. Let us ask Him, "Lord, what is a vine to you?" As if God is saying, "Whom do you think I am referring to the vine in the following?"

*Psalms 80:8 "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it."*

*John 15:5 "I am the vine, ye are the branches..."<sup>9</sup>*

*"You know that I am referring to My chosen people. Truly so, they will never accept the position of 'king.' In refusing the position, the vine told the trees:"*

*Judges 9:13 "And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"*

*"Do you know what the vine meant by, 'the wine which cheereth Me and man?' When My disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they were mistaken to have taken on new wine."*

*Acts 2:13-15 "Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. <sup>14</sup>But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea... be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: <sup>15</sup>For these are not drunken, as ye suppose..."*

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<sup>9</sup> Jesus in His role as "Son of God" in contrast with His role as "Father God" never did He show "above" His Disciples.

Luke 22:24-26 "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. <sup>25</sup> And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. <sup>26</sup> But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."

*"Truly so, the vine would not give up the wine or the Holy Spirit for the hollow honor that goes with the position of 'king.' The 'wine' cheereth Me and men. The vine is referring to the fruit(s) in union with the Holy Spirit that delight Me and their neighbors."*

*Galatians 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, <sup>23</sup>Meekness, temperance..."*

With God's explanation of His words, we have seen how the *olive, vine, and fig trees*, symbolizing His chosen people refused to be "king." Only God is the King, the "Guide, Teacher, Leader, Pastor, and Shepherd."<sup>10</sup> God's chosen people with the knowledge endowed to some of them to speak for Him do not take the honor, the respect, the eminence, and distinction that only belong to Him.

*James 2:9 "But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors."*

## THE BRAMBLE ACCEPTED THE POSITION OF KING!

*Judges 9:14-15 "Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow..."*

To us, the bramble is a literal shrub that does not produce edible fruits. It is more a nuisance underbrush among trees that it is just thrown into the fire. From the foregoing symbolism for the former trees, it is quite easy to know who are alluded to as the *bramble*.

*Luke 6:43 "For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. <sup>44</sup>For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes."*

*Matthew 7:19 "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. <sup>20</sup>Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."*

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<sup>10</sup> Jesus Christ in His role as "Father God."

Our Lord Jesus Christ was referring to the religious leaders during His time when He spoke of the foregoing parable. How clear is the account of the birth of the *Pastoral System*?

Religious sects during the time of Christ fought each other. Yet when they met our Lord and His Apostles, they became united in hating and condemning Jesus Christ. Do we not expect to happen the same thing today? While no two religious sects can agree on doctrines, will they not be one and united also in hating and condemning the truth? Jesus Christ is the truth (John 14:6).

Peter was the initiator in appointing Matthias as a fellow apostle. This happened before Pentecost when the eleven apostles and the other disciples had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Our Lord, of course, rejected the act for only He is authorized to appoint apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

*Ephesians 4:11 "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;"*

This blunder of the apostles was confirmed when our Lord Jesus Christ, in His Spirit manifestation, appointed Saul of Tarsus, known as Paul, as the legitimate replacement for Judas Iscariot.

*Romans 1:1 "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God."*

*Galatians 1:11 "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. <sup>12</sup>For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

Paul never considered himself leader or head as to be above among the disciples:

*1 Corinthians 2:3-5 "And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. <sup>4</sup>And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. <sup>5</sup>That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."*

Where now are the vaunted leadership, authority, control, and hold of the leaders over the laity? It is understandable why the olive, vine, and fig trees refused the position of “king” offered by the trees. “Kingship” is Nicolaitanism that Jesus Christ hates:

*Revelation 2:6 “But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.”*

*Revelation 2:15 “So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.”*

Nicolaitanism is idolatry for the soul. The word nicolaitans comes from the me., Ofr. Nicolas; L. Nicolaus; Gr. nikolaos <nike, victory + laos, the people. Thus, victory over the people. (College Edition – Webster’s New World of the English Language)

Unwittingly, religious leaders enjoy “victory” over the people in religious matters. With the kind of organizational set-up in religious sects, the leaders cannot help but occupy a position of esteem over the laity, the people. The practice sets a favorable atmosphere for idolizing the leaders of the organization, which the subjects equally enjoy. Unknowingly, both the subject and the object become victims of the sin of idolatry of even higher order. This time, people are the objects of idolatrous worship. God condemned Lucifer, the first to rob Him of this honor and glory.

Jesus Christ during His time condemned the practice of the Scribes and Pharisees in:

*Matthew 23:5-10 “But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, <sup>6</sup>And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, <sup>7</sup>And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. <sup>8</sup>But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. <sup>9</sup>And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. <sup>10</sup>Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.”*

Can we not see that what was condemned by our Lord during His time is the very same thing we find in the people who say they are the followers of Christ today? Do not leaders of religious sects also love the greetings and extraordinary attention from the people? Don’t they also dress distinctly from the laity in order to be recognized? Leaders of some religious sects are called

“father.” Leaders of other sects refused to be called “Rabbi,” but “teacher or Pastor” means the same thing? What is even worse in the eyes of God is, they are being addressed *Reverend*, when this special title belongs exclusively to God.

*Psalms 111:9 “He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.”*

Peter, the apostle believed to head the church founded by Christ and whose position the leaders of religious sects imagine to assume, warns of the malpractice, which in essence is Nicolaitanism:

*1 Peter 5:3 “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.”*

The spiritual Church representing *Christianity* in the 1st century should not be confused with the religious sects that make up *Christianity Today*. Jesus Christ gave this revelation in:

*Revelation 17:5 “And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”*

Christianity we know today evolved over many centuries. The biggest religious sect started it and many denominations follow some of her unscriptural doctrines that God calls “abominations of the earth.”

During the time Christ, the line is drawn distinguishing the *Disciples of Christ* from the *Religious People*. It is the *bramble* that accepted the position of “king.” Our Lord saw this in the religious leaders, the Scribes and Pharisees, whom the people trusted and looked up (Matthew 23:11). This is the condition imposed by the bramble in accepting the position of “king:” “*If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow.*” Very clearly this is the kind of trust for the “truth” that we find people have in their religious leaders in every denomination. Here is the warning of God to the Israelites when they were asking for a “king.”

*1 Samuel 8:15 “And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. <sup>16</sup>And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men... He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants.”*

The warning came to pass in the following when God spoke of the false shepherds. Inasmuch as the word of God does not pass away, can they be identified during the time of Christ? Today?

*Isaiah 56:10-12 "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. <sup>11</sup>Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. <sup>12</sup>Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant."*

- a. "They are blind" – the blind cannot see the light. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." Truly so, the false shepherds cannot "see" or recognize God and Jesus Christ. And because Jesus Christ is the truth, they cannot see the truth. This was demonstrated during the time of our Lord. The false shepherds were the teachers of the law. Did they truly recognize Jesus Christ so as to also know the Father? Our Lord sharply rebuked them:

*John 8:54 "Jesus answered... it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God. <sup>55</sup>Yet ye have not known him..."*

*John 8:19 "...Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."*

Does this rebuke stop reverberating in the ears of professing apostles of Christ today? Are they not taking the role of Christ expounding on His parables? How easy to identify false apostles in our time after humbling ourselves like "babes" in the eyes of our Lord.

- b. "They are all ignorant" – this indicates being devoid of understanding. Of what?

*1 Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*

The false shepherds cannot understand “spiritual things.” Spiritual things are the spiritual meaning and the great message of the Word of God.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, false shepherds were/are still *natural men* compared with the real shepherds who were/are *spiritual men*:

*1 Corinthians 2:15 “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. <sup>16</sup>For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.”*

- c. “*They are all dumb dogs that cannot bark*” – “spiritual dogs” belong to those on the outside:

*Revelation 22:15 “Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”*

“*Cannot bark*” – must refer to the inability to rebuke on the basis of truth, for them themselves do not have the truth. The real shepherds today rebuke as Jesus, the model shepherd, showed the way during His time. Read the whole chapter of Matthew 23 on how our Lord rebuked the Teachers of the Law and Pharisees very sharply.

- d. “*Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber*” – indicates absence of the “spiritual oil.” *Emotional* zeal should be distinguished from the “Spiritual Fire.”

*Matthew 25:3-5 “They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them...while the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.”*

*Romans 11:8 “...God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear...”*

- e. “*...they are greedy dogs, every one for his gain*” – False shepherds look after their own selfish interest: material, physical, and financial. Selfishness may include egotism which refers to self-exaltation.

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<sup>11</sup> John 6:63 “...the words that I (Jesus speaking) speak unto you, they are spirit...”

Romans 7:14 “For we know that the law is spiritual...”

- f. *“I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink”* – this does not mean that false shepherds are drunkards. Wine has a spiritual meaning. It refers to the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> Since False Shepherds could not possibly receive the Holy Spirit, “wine” here refers to the counterfeit. Religious emotionalism<sup>13</sup> is mistaken for Holy Spirit outpouring. “Wonders” thought to be “miracles” have come from the Holy Spirit, benefiting the body and appealing to the senses, exudes emotionalism.<sup>14</sup> A chapter on MIRACLES AND WONDERS will be taken up in Volume 2.

To another Old Testament prophet, *Ezekiel*, God poured His rebuke to the false shepherds:

*Ezekiel 34:2-6 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel...Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? <sup>3</sup>Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. <sup>4</sup>The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. <sup>5</sup>And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. <sup>6</sup>My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.*

*Ezekiel 34:7-10 “Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; <sup>8</sup>As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherd search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; <sup>9</sup>therefore, O ye*

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<sup>12</sup> When the Apostles were filled with the *Holy Spirit* at Pentecost, people thought that they drank wine:

Acts 2:12-13 “And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new *wine*.”

<sup>13</sup> Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”

<sup>14</sup> Matthew 24:24 “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

*shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; <sup>10</sup>Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves anymore; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them."*

Distinction should be made between "feeding with the word of God" and "religious feeding with emotional refreshment." How relevant is the following:

*Amos 8:11 "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: <sup>12</sup>And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it."*

- g. "Woe to them that feed themselves" – indicates that the spiritual shepherds are working for their self-interest. It may be financial, material, or emotional as self-exaltation. Jesus Christ showed the way with "nothing of this sort." With many verses, He expressed His deep humility, giving all glory and honor to the Father. Paul followed the example of our Lord. John the Baptist who was not one of the Disciples of Christ, by divine revelation, knew about it when he said in:

*John 3:30 "He must increase, but I must decrease."*

The "false shepherds of Israel" are "feeding their ego" out of the "letter" instead the "spirit" of the word that "giveth life." Jesus Christ saw this during His time when He rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees, who were typical of the false shepherds (Matt. 23:5-10).

Even in the Old Testament, glory and reverence for the name of the Creator was already recognized. David wrote about it. The title Reverend should never be appropriated by any man, nor Holy be prefixed to a name:

*Psalms 111:9 "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever; holy and reverend is his name."*

Who appropriate the glorified titles of: Reverend (Rev.), Father (Fr.), Teacher, D.D., Ph.D. Theo., Bible Scholar, Theologian, Pastor? Who are addressed, "Your Holiness, your Eminence?"

- h. *"Should not the shepherd feed the flock?"* – Christ saw this in His time. The teachers of the law, the Scribes, were supposed to "feed" God's people, the Jews, with the Word of God. Did the Scribes feed the Jews spiritually in the eyes of Jesus? Maybe in the eyes of the people, but never before God!

Will this truth pass away without being fulfilled today? Has Ecclesiastes 1:9 and 3:15 been revised such that the present time is excepted from this truth? What is spiritual feeding in the first place? Is it synonymous with emotional feeding? Can man distinguish the two kinds of feeding: spiritual and emotional?

*Ecclesiastes 1:9 "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun."*

- i. *"Ye eat the fat and ye clothe you with the wool"* – can the shepherds eat the fat and take the wool without killing the flock? Of course no "right-thinking" preacher of the word will ever physically murder one of his parishioners, just to take advantage of him. But does man see the difference between killing before the eyes of God, and killing before the eyes of men?" Does not God through His word distinguish spiritual from physical murder?
- j. *"Ye feed not the flock"* – God's people are not fed the way He wants them to be. God requires spiritual feeding. Are the flock truly spiritually fed with the spiritual Word? Or are they only emotionally, intellectually, or sensually (of the senses) refreshed?
- k. *"Not healed the sick"* – does not this refer only to physical healing? God prefers the soul over the body. God refers to spiritual healing of the soul, that the flock remain healthy and worthy of eternal life.

*Matthew 10:28 "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."*

*John 6:63 "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."*

*John 9:39-41 "Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.<sup>40</sup> And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, are we blind also?<sup>41</sup> Jesus said unto them, if ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."*

- l. *"Neither have ye sought that which was lost"* – Real evangelism shall be distinguished from proselyting. Proselyte simply promotes the interest of a particular religious sect through increased membership. Bigger membership yields greater benefits to the leaders. Real evangelism is the spiritual search for the lost souls and is led to the "right way" and not "man's way."
- m. *"With force and cruelty have ye ruled them"* – This is "Nicolaitanism" or the dominion of the leaders over the laity. Religious leaders exercise authority over the members under the guise of church discipline. In pure Christianity, it is the *Truth* in the word that leads everybody in the Church. It is the Word that teaches, guides, strengthens, and directs the members to the Way. Does not this sound foolishness to the Natural Man.<sup>15</sup>
- n. *"The flock are scattered because there is no shepherd"* – Are not so-called Christians scattered to different religious sects, with different belief of the truth?
- o. *"Nor seek or search for them"* – real evangelism should be distinguished from proselyting. Jesus Christ rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees for proselyting:

*Matthew 23:15 "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."*

God's Standard of wickedness should be distinguished from the Human Standard. Righteousness under Man's Standard may be wickedness under God's Standard. Example: The belief and the good deeds of the Scribes, Pharisees, and the Sadducees, and the Elders of Israel were righteousness

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<sup>15</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned."

under Man's Standard. Truth does not pass away and should be seen in our time where people are exposed only to Man's Standard.

God's promise of deliverance from the hands of the false shepherds is fulfilled. Jesus Christ is the Deliverer. Jesus Christ is the Truth. It is the truth that finally bails out God's people from satanic hold.

*John 8:31 "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

### **"UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH"**

Leaders of Christian sects today have diverse recognition of Jesus: some say, "Jesus is only a man and not God." Others say, "Jesus is only a mighty for there is a supreme or Almighty God." Still others say, "The name of the Father and the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ." Many leaders say, "Jesus is both God and man, and He is the second person of the Holy Trinity."

This is a clear rehash of how people at Caesarea Philippi recognized Jesus:

*Matthew 16:13 "When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? <sup>14</sup>And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets."*

The words of God never pass away. The characters and circumstances vary but the message remains the same. Leaders of sects today may claim recognizing Jesus as Simon Peter did in:

*Matthew 16:15 "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? <sup>16</sup>And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."*

The difference lies in the declaration of Jesus!

*Matthew 16:17 "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."*

Impostors' hypocrisy is uncovered from the very word coming from their mouth in saying, "The infinite Father cannot be clearly identified with the finite mind of man." Jesus will sharply rebuke them, saying:

*John 8:19 "...Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."*

This reproof never applied to Simon Peter for he clearly recognized the Father and the Son Jesus Christ. He and the chosen of God are direct beneficiaries of the promise of the New Testament: <sup>16</sup>

*Hebrew 8:11 "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."*

Therefore, Simon Peter and the chosen of God by divine revelation have followed the "first of all the commandments." "The Lord our God is one Lord" is discussed in Chapter 5: GOD IS IDENTIFYING HIMSELF! Shall we not listen to Him?

*Mark 12:29 "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord."*

Simon Peter on recognizing Jesus by divine revelation was told:

*Matthew 16:18 "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*

Some sects interpret Peter is the rock upon whom the Church is built. Thus, Peter is the *foundation*. Proving the "strength of the foundation," these sects grew in size and stature declaring this as proof "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Many denominations claim Jesus is the rock by citing the following:

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<sup>16</sup> Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a *new covenant*... <sup>33</sup> ...After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD..."

*1 Corinthians 10:4 "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."*

As in the other assertion, these sects also grow in size and number of membership. What is the truth? To man, the "strength of foundation" is measured by the size of membership, expansion of physical facilities<sup>17</sup> and growth of religious and civic activities,<sup>18</sup> and perhaps the elitism of members. During the time of Christ, these must be what many people were attracted and therefore joined the sects.

Jesus showed the distinction between earthly and heavenly. To God, the "strength of the foundation" is based on the power of truth being preached:

*Ephesians 2:20 "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."*

Therefore, it is not the size or the number of members, not the vastness of physical facilities, nor how people are fascinated by the activities. Very clear this is not what is meant by "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Rather, it is the impregnability of the doctrines of truth being preach that tear down whatever "man has built as religious foundation."

Since "Jesus Christ is the chief corner stone and the apostles and prophets as foundation," human wisdom and emotionalism cannot refute and cause a crack on it. This is proven in the Acts of the Apostles how the Church fared with the enemies. The Church is the living temple composed of real believers.

*1 Corinthians 3:16 "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"*

## CONCLUSION

We have seen that the Holy Bible is not as simple as prose and poetry conceived only to cater to the mind and inner fervor of man. It is not as easy as a history book that records past events, with characters no longer resurrected. Rather, the word of God is alive for it represents God Himself as, "*the Word was God.*"

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<sup>17</sup> Building of chapels, churches, and cathedrals.

<sup>18</sup> Building of seminaries, home for the aged, orphanages, different foundations for general welfare, etc.

It is alive, that is why it hurts.<sup>19</sup> It is alive because the characters, and events, and circumstances in the Old Testament time can be identified during the time of Jesus Christ, as they are perceived today.<sup>20</sup> It is for this reason that the caution given by the apostles in the first century is like a fresh warning to us today. False apostles are positively identifiable:

*2 Timothy 3:7 "Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."*

Sincerity is good but it is not all that qualifies man to the divine function:

*Romans 10:2 "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."*

Warnings are poured upon the people of God to separate themselves, as He separated the Israelites from the Egyptians, Jebusites, Hittites, Amalekites, and Canaanites. Jesus Christ separated His chosen few from the Scribes, Pharisees, and the Sadducees; as the Shepherd separates the sheep from the goats:

*Ephesians 4:14 "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."*

Jesus Christ's revelation to John the apostle in the island of Patmos is as fresh as the morning dew to the real people of God:

*Revelation 2:2 "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."*

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<sup>19</sup> Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

<sup>20</sup> Ecclesiastes 1:9 "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun."

Ecclesiastes 3:15 "That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past."

Jesus Christ, continuing with His exhortation, gives a refreshing strength that will carry the chosen to the end:

*Revelation 2:9 "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich; and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."*

#### WHO ARE THE REAL APOSTLES?

1. Like the model Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and the real apostles of AD 33-96, they are obscure and unsung. They do the *function*, but never appropriate the *title, honor, and glory*.
2. They are never taught or appointed by any man, or a group of men, as Paul testified.

*Roman 1:1 "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God."*

*Galatians 1:11 "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. <sup>12</sup>For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."*

John had the same revelation. They will never train prospective apostles or appoint one, for they recognize the sole authority.

*1 John 1:27 "But the anointing which you have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you..."*

3. They will never think of formulating doctrines, for these are already "founded" by Christ:

*Romans 15:20 "Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation."*

*1 Corinthians 3:11 "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup> Matthew 16:18 "...and upon this rock, I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

4. They accept the word of God like "little children," not philosophizing and looking for ways to elude the bitter truth.
5. They can be identified with the pure Christianity that the original apostles espoused, they being the foundation of the spiritual Church:

*Ephesians 2:19-22 "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; <sup>20</sup>And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. <sup>21</sup>In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: <sup>22</sup>In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."*

6. They are chosen by God to give spiritual nourishment to His people, and not the counterfeit emotional and intellectual refreshment appealing only to the senses:

*Jeremiah 3:15 "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding."*

*Jeremiah 23:4 "And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the Lord."*

Bearing in mind that Jesus Christ is the Word (Revelation 19:13), and He is the truth (John 14:6), the real spiritual Shepherd is revealed:

*Revelation 7:17 "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."*

May the great spiritual message of God remain forever in the heart of the reader who accepts the Word like "a little child:"

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1 Corinthians 10:4 "And did all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank the spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

*Ezekiel 34:16 "I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment."*

In addition, may the reader who cannot understand spiritual things be reminded that "feeding with judgment" is not executed literally-physically. Jesus Christ demonstrated this when He gave the sentence to the Scribes and Pharisees.

*Matthew 23:33 "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"*

Physically, these people enjoyed popular support, and won the respect and praise of the many. In their own eyes, they were even "blessed" with prosperity of all kinds, social and political elitism, and material and financial aristocracy.

When Jesus Christ was called, "*He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?*" many people believed the religious leaders. Spiritual "feeding with judgment" can never be understood by the natural man for, indeed, it is foolishness to him.<sup>22</sup>

#### THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

The last sign given by our Lord for "the end" is the "*preaching of the gospel of the kingdom in all the world.*"<sup>23</sup> True to the prophecy, there are no "apostles of Christ" today representing the different religious sects and denominations who do not preach the "gospel of the kingdom." Unknown to many people, the true gospel by the real Apostles will not be heard in "all the cities of Israel."

*Matthew 10:21-23 "And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. <sup>22</sup>And ye shall be hated of all men for my*

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<sup>22</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 24:14 "And this *gospel of the kingdom* shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." [Is this true to the "letter" of the word?]

name's<sup>24</sup> sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. <sup>23</sup>But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another; for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come."

In contrast with the spread of the "gospel of the kingdom" in Matthew 24:14; the true gospel preached by the real apostles will not be heard as extensively as the counterfeit gospel being spread by the false apostles!

*Jeremiah 22:29 "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD."*



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<sup>24</sup> The *name* of the Lord is, "The Word of God." Revelation 19:13