



THE PRIESTHOOD

By
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**COPTIC ORTHODOX
PATRIARCHATE**



See of St. Mark

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***H.H. Pope Shenouda III, 117th Pope of
Alexandria and the See of St. Mark***



..THE STORY OF THIS BOOK

These lectures began as part of a course on comparative theology as requested by the Theological College, in 1978 and then completed in 1981. Some of these lectures had in fact been attacked by the Plymouth Brethren denomination in various books, which opposes the fundamental sacrament of priesthood. Their oppositions are based on two grounds:

- 1) The claim that there is only one priest in heaven and on earth, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) The incorrect interpretation of the verse which says:

(Rev 1:6) and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father

This book sets out to refute both these points.

I have also dealt with the attempts which Kooreh, Nathan and Erbium undertook in the days of Moses to seize the priesthood, saying that the whole nation was holy and priestly. I will then explain how God remains the same, both in the Old and the New Testament. And that the law of the priesthood has also stayed the same, but according to the rite of Melchizedek not that of Aaron.

The book is also centred around the sacrament of priesthood, a sacrament set aside for a select group and not for all.

It would suffice to refer to Saint Paul:

(Heb 5:4) And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

We have, however, put forward many proofs of this, such as that the priesthood is a vocation, something for which one is called for then chosen, and it is also a mission.

Priesthood is not for everyone. It calls for special qualifications and requires the Laying of Hands and a Holy Breath, which are not given to all peoples.

We have also stated the various priestly titles and duties which are unique for the priests.

We have also linked the office of a priest to the altar, the holy sacrifice and the authority to tie and to loosen.

We have set aside a full chapter for the zealots who assume that Christ is the only priest, and hold the view that human priesthood, robs God of His Honour.

Following this, we deal with priesthood as service, and the clergymen as servants, and entrusted as His vicars.

In chapter 10, I conclude by answering various questions, not covered in previous chapters which already contain numerous examples of objections and replies to such objections. These ten chapters form the first part of our series about the priesthood. God willing, the second part will be about the pastoral work of the clergy, and about some of the qualities, which a clergyman needs to possess to successfully carry out their mission.

We have decreed that this book shall form part of the syllabus of all branches of our Theological Colleges.

Pope Shenouda III

CHAPTER 1

DENYING THE ROLE OF PRIESTHOOD AND ATTEMPTS TO SEIZE IT

- 1) Those who deny the priesthood and the evidence they present.
- 2) What does spiritual priesthood and universal priesthood mean?
- 3) The attempt to seize the priesthood, was an ancient rebellion, which was swiftly crushed by the Lord.
- 4) Is there only one priest?

OBJECTIONS

Those who object to priesthood tend to take one of two conflicting basis;

FIRST BASIS FOR OBJECTION

CHRIST IS THE ONLY PRIEST

That Priesthood is limited to the blessed Person of Christ, and there is no priesthood for any other human.

SECOND BASIS FOR OBJECTION

WE ARE ALL PRIESTS

All believers, without exceptions, are priests. All are equal and no one has any privilege above others, i.e. all share the same level of responsibility and the same honour.

FIRST OBJECTION

The objectors rely and produce the following biblical references:

(1 Pet 2:9) But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

They interpret this verse to mean that all are priests, and there is no specific rank of priests!

They also use the words of the Book of Revelation:

(Rev 1:6) and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father.

But the question at hand is this:

“Is the rank of priesthood available to all? Or are there a special category of people who are set aside for this priestly function?”

In actual fact, the phrase used by Saint Peter says:

(1 Pet 2:9) But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

is synonymous with what God told the Jews in the Old Testament

(Exo 19:6) 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Most definitely these words did not mean that all the people were priests and were to carry out the known duties of the priests.

This misinterpretation was definitely rejected by God in the case of Kooreh, Nathan and Erbiun who used the same line of argument against Moses and Aaron:

(Num 16:3) They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

And despite the fact that the whole community was holy, God chose particular people to be His priests, and did the same in the New Testament.

So the term priesthood was indiscriminately a common right for all, without differentiation.

While the same verse exists in the Old Testament, priesthood was not something held in common by all rather the contrary, for God singled out Aaron and his sons for this special purpose.

God, in no uncertain terms, dealt with any person from them who dared to unlawfully practice priesthood, even to the extent of death.

Only the priests were to offer the sacrifices, raise incense and perform the other functions of priesthood.

No one else ever dared to do any of these things, not even the king, who was referred to as 'the Messiah of the Lord'.

Despite the fact that the entire nation was "A priestly kingdom" according to the Word of God, the Lord still declared such prohibitions and instituted punishment for those who disobeyed.

So what is meant by:

(Rev 1:6) and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Is priesthood then a common right of all?

Obviously it is not, as this verse could not be taken literally to mean that we are all kings and priests.

Please note that it does not say 'we are all priests', but rather "kings and priests".

It is obvious that the word 'kings' here, is not to be taken literally, for we cannot all be kings, wearing crowns, sitting on thrones, ruling peoples and being referred to as "Your Majesty!"

Therefore, in as much as the people are not literally 'kings', then they are not literally 'priests' either.

The same applies to the expression, "a kingdom of priests", which I have explained was not taken literally when it was uttered in the Old Testament.

So what does the reference to the priesthood in both these expressions mean?

This question brings us to the spiritual and metaphorical meaning of priesthood.

THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF PRIESTHOOD

What is the spiritual meaning of the word 'Priesthood'?

Without doubt, priesthood is something spiritual, and in a sense, any believer can offer spiritual sacrifices and spiritual incense without actually being a priest.

David the Psalmist said:

(Psa 141:2) Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

This is the spiritual priesthood: raising this kind of incense and this kind of sacrifice. This is something which is granted to all.

In his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul says:

(Rom 12:1) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

This is the sacrifice which every believer can and should offer. In doing so, a person can be considered a priest', in a spiritual sense.

(Gal 5:24) And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

St. Paul also mentions other mortification of the flesh

(2 Cor 4:10-12) always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. {11} For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. {12} So then death is working in us, but life in you.

All these spiritual sacrifices are part of worship and prayer.

Another example is the sacrifice of praise,

(Heb 13:15) Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

(Psa 116:17) I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And will call upon the name of the LORD.

(Heb 13:16) But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

(Phil 4:18) Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

Offering these kinds of sacrifice is what is intended in the spiritual priesthood of all believers.

But this does not in any way prohibit or prevent setting aside a special priesthood for the offering of the holy sacraments, for which God has chosen certain individuals to serve in this way.

Both these aspects can be found together in the Old and New Testaments. The prayers of the prophet David used to rise like incense before God, and the raising of his hands was an evening sacrifice.

(Psa 141:2) Let my prayer be set before You as incense, The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Yet, David would have dared, even though he was the Lord's anointed and a prophet, to offer a sacrifice in the same way as the least among the priest of the sons of Aaron.

In the New Testament, every individual can offer a number of sacrifices of praise or hymns of thanks or make a gift or distribution or present his body as a living sacrifice or to raise his hands as an evening sacrifice, but that does not mean that he should dare offer the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of our Lord in the sacrament of the Eucharist. This is the role of the priest as affirmed in the New Testament.

Observe what St. Paul said about the priesthood of the New Testament.

(Heb 5:4) And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

If the one who is called by God, being the priest, then the priesthood is not for everybody, and not everyone can lay a claim to it.

The desire to seize the priesthood and declare it as a common right to all, is an old issue for which our unchangeable God, set right by severe and decisive punishment.

AN OLD BUT ABORTED ATTEMPT

There is nothing new about the problem of the rebellion against priesthood, and the attempt to seize it and grant it as a birthright to all, such rebellion was spearheaded by people who wrongly interpreted "a kingdom of priests",

(Num 16:3) They gathered together against Moses and Aaron, and said to them, "You take too much upon yourselves, for all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of the LORD?"

Koorah, Dathan and Abeeram spearheaded a group of rebels, grabbed the incensers and proceeded to offer incense. As recorded in chapter 16 of the Book of Numbers. The Lord commanded the earth to open up and swallow up all of them.

And as a result the Lord said to Aaron:

(Num 18:7) "Therefore you and your sons with you shall attend to your priesthood for everything at the altar and behind

the veil; and you shall serve. I give your priesthood to you as a gift for service, but the outsider who comes near shall be put to death."

It is remarkable to observe the confirmation uttered by the Lord of the principal of selective priesthood for a group. Thus God quelled that rebellion decisively.

These circumstances were repeated in various forms, and Lord and in all cases, resulted in God's punishment.

a) When King Saul dared to raise the burnt offering,

(1 Sam 13:9) So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering.

(1 Sam 16:14) But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him.

the Lord rejected him, and the Spirit of the Lord departed from him and an evil spirit from the Lord descended upon him

Yet, Saul was no ordinary person, he was the anointed messiah. At some stage prior, the Spirit of the Lord had come upon him and he had prophesied. *(1 Sam 10:10- 11).*

But none of this had given him the right to perform any of the functions of the priesthood, which were available to even the least important of Aaron's sons.

b) King Uzziah also dared to hold the censer to raise the incense,

(2 Chr 26:19-21) Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the

priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar. {20} And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. {21} King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. Then Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

His action was considered treachery and he was banished and excluded from the house of the Lord, where he remained a leper till the day of his death.

These are significant examples from the Bible. Though some people object and say, that priesthood belonged to the Old Testament and that priesthood was abolished in the New Testament, as God no longer puts a mediator between Himself and man!

This brings us to ask, ‘Is God in the Old Testament different from the God in the New Testament?’

SECOND OBJECTION

IS GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT DIFFERENT TO THE ONE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT?

God has no variation or shadow of turning.
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I say this because when we use the Old Testament to prove matters of belief, we are sometimes confronted by people who

belittle, and some time despise the Old Testament! This group of people sometimes describe the Old Testament as a rigid law, devoid of mercy and heavenly grace. In their disrespect to the Old Testament they attempt to teach that the New Testament has superseded and abolished the Old.

While the same people who on one hand attack the Old Testament, adorn their publications by the famous verse

(2 Tim 3:16) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

It is obvious that their use of such verse is mere rhetoric. And if all Scripture is inspired by God, then why this audacious attacks on the Old Testament?

Has God changed His dealings with His people?

Does He accept mediators in the Old Testament, then changes His stance and reject them in the New?

Saint James speaks about this point:

(James 1:17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

God is the same yesterday, today and forever.

We recall some of the beautiful words, which our Lord Jesus Himself used when He referred to the Old Testament in the Sermon on the Mount:

(Mat 5:17-19) "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. {18} "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. {19} "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Thus we can boldly say that not only the Old Testament is not superseded, but as a matter of fact not even a single letter or dot of it could be made devoid.

QUESTIONS ON THE SABBATH, CIRCUMCISION, FEASTS...ETC

Perhaps some people may ask, Are we required to observe the Old Testament rules regarding the observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, festivals, blood sacrifices, impurity and purification, which St. Paul referred to as being

(Col 2:17) ... a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

I would say to you that we are not required to observe the letter of the Law.

However, some of the Old Testament edicts have not been nullified

You might then ask: How can they be reconciled in this case?

Let us then consider the following four examples, namely Observing the Sabbath, Circumcision, Feasts and Aaronic Priesthood and Sacrifices.

THE COMMANDMENT TO OBSERVE THE SABBATH

This commandment still stands, in essence, as the Lord's holy day of the week and has never been challenged.

The Sabbath means rest, and the land observe a Sabbath to the Lord every seventh year, regardless of the actual days of the week.

(Lev 25:2) "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD.

Since the Sabbath represents rest, we might ask: When did the Lord rest? His only real rest came when He freed man from death, the wage and fruit of our sins.

He delivered us from the wages of sin, by His crucifixion on the sixth day, and freed us from death by His resurrection on the Sunday.

Hence Sunday became the day of the "true rest" of our Lord, to replace the Sabbath, the symbolic day of rest.

So resting is a biblical commandment and setting aside a day for the Lord still stands as a divine commandment in line with the spirit and the intent of the original ordinance.

Here we see a literal commandment translated to its true spiritual meaning, the commandment was not annulled, but enhanced. We now celebrate God's rest on the day of our salvation, in place of His day of rest after Creation.

Remember to keep the Sabbath holy, or remember to keep the Lord's day holy, they both mean the same thing, remembering that

(2 Cor 3:6) ...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

THE COMMANDMENT OF MALE CIRCUMCISION

God does not lay down His commandments haphazardly, nor does He change His teachings.

When He instituted circumcision, for a spiritual meaning which probably was not understood. But they understood the outward symbol.

The severing and the death of a small bodily part, was a symbol of the death with Christ in baptism.

(Rom 6:4) Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Hence the “bodily death” that symbolised by circumcision is current and is everlasting. Hence the commandment stands, but has assumed its spiritual intent, rather than the literal.

The Lord Jesus did not abolish the Law, but applied the spirit of the law.

He did not abolish the Sabbath, but explained actual application and meaning of the rest.

Nor did He abolish the death of a part of the body through circumcision, but explained how death was fulfilled in a spiritual sense through baptism, for which circumcision had become the symbol.

(Col 2:11-12) In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, {12} buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

THE FESTIVALS

Festivals also still remain, but now represent new meanings. Old Testament festivals symbolised the feasts of the New Testament.

The Old Testament Passover is still current, but now it represents Christ as our True Passover and the True Lamb.

(1 Cor 5:7) Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

Following the Passover we still celebrate the Festival of the Unleavened Bread, but as instructed by the Holy Spirit:

(1 Cor 5:8) Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The Pentecost, an old Testament feast (refer to Lev. 23), we now celebrate for 50 days after the day of resurrection.

And so with other feasts, which changed from being an Old Testament symbol, to those being fulfilled in the New Testament.

So it is evident that the Commandment is confirmed and not obliterated.

ALSO THE SACRIFICES AND THE PRIESTHOOD

The blood sacrifices symbolised the Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. The principle of sacrifice was not abolished in the New Testament, but still stands, though we have now taken the spiritual meaning instead of the literal.

Thus the altar continued to exist in Christianity, though not for blood sacrifices;

(1 Cor 5:7) Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

Similarly, the priesthood was not abolished, but rather transformed from being of the order of Aaron, to the order of Melchizedek, and from a priesthood that offered blood sacrifices, to one which offers bread and wine.

The Scriptures states in Genesis

(Gen 14:18) Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High.

Saint Paul clearly explained the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek to be above that of the Aaronic priesthood.

(Heb 7:3) without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

(Heb 7:21) for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek

(Heb 7:24) But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

Refer also to (Psalm 110:4)

So Christianity did not contradict the Law and the Prophets, but what was meant literally was preserved as is. And that which was intended as a symbol, was understood and fulfilled in the New Testament.

The Old Testament remains, but the Lord Jesus removed the veil from people's minds so that believers could see with their spiritual eyes.

(2 Cor 3:14-16) But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. {15} But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. {16} Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

It is regrettable to read some literature which is disrespectful of God's Holy Book, the Old Testament. These writers also hurl many insults to the great patriarchs and saints of the Old Testament.

It is my desire, God willing, to explain to you the significance and the importance of the Old Testament.

What remains in this chapter is to respond to the question:

HAS THE PRIESTHOOD COME TO AN END?

- * Did the priesthood of mankind come to an end with the sacrifice of Christ?
- * Did Christ, becomes the one and only priest?

Here we observe a contradiction in people who claim that "God has made us to be a kingdom and priests", and at the same time they say "Human priesthood is no more".

- Is the priesthood of Christ limited to mean offering Himself as a sacrifice?

And if it so, God forbid, does this mean that the Priesthood of Christ has come to an end?

While He is an Eternal Priest:

(Heb 7:3) without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

(Heb 7:21) (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek'"),

(Heb 7:24) But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.

He perpetually offers us His Body and Blood:

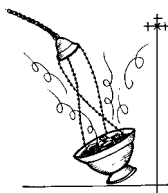
(John 6:56) "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

So if our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ offers His Body and His Blood to every believer and every generation, does He need to conduct this sacrament Himself, or can it be done through His vicars and apostles who propagate His edict.

(1 Cor 11:25) In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Hence priests are required to “carry out His remembrance”

Who said that the bible did not mention other Priests except for Christ?



SAINT PAUL AS A TRUE PRIEST

Here we see Saint Paul declaring:

(Rom 15:16) that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

Here we see Saint Paul ministering “the offering of the Gentiles”, in his capacity as a priest, and if so, how can someone say the human priesthood should be no more?

Some Arabic speaking Evangelical brethren, try to play on words by using the literal sentence construction to claim that Saint Paul was not calling himself a minister or a priest.

Even if he literally is saying “I proclaim the gospel of God as a minister of Christ Jesus”, does not mean that he is a pretend priest.

Another point we should consider, is that on a number of occasions, Christ is referred to as a “High Priest”.

WHAT DOES ‘HIGH PRIEST’ MEAN?

Christ, a High Priest denotes that He is in charge of other priests, having other priest, under His command. Saint Paul address this point in his epistle to the Hebrews:

(Heb 3:1) Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.

(Heb 5:10) called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"

(Heb 6:20) where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

(Heb 4:15) For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

So if Christ, as witnessed by the Scriptures is a High (Chief) Priest, so who should be under His command, other than the New Testament priests?

In the parable of the wicked vine keepers, which represents the evil priests in the Old Testament, we notice that the Scriptures did not say that He abolished the positions of the evil vine keepers.

(Mat 21:41) They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."

(Mat 21:43) "Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

The above verse also prophesied about the Gentiles Priesthood.



THE PRIESTHOOD FOR GENTILES.

In the book of Malachi, the Lord addresses the Jews saying:

(Mal 1:11) For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations," Says the LORD of hosts.

So who are those who will bring incense and pure offerings to the Lord from the Gentiles other than the New Testament priests?

(Isa 66:19-21) "I will set a sign among them; and those among them who escape I will send to the nations: to Tarshish and Pul and Lud, who draw the bow, and Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands afar off who have not heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. {20} "Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the LORD out of all nations, on horses and in chariots and in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says the LORD, "as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. {21} "And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites," says the LORD.

It was unheard of in the Old Testament for the Lord to take for Himself priests from the Gentiles.

So Gentile Priests refer to, with out doubt, to the New Testament Priests.

So to claim that Christ is the only Priest and that there should be no human priests in the New Testament, is contrary to the divine inspiration and Holy Scriptures.



CHAPTER 2

PRIESTHOOD IS A CALLING AND A MISSION

The “Calling” is so clear and so important in both Testaments, as stated clearly by Saint Paul:

(Heb 5:4) And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

From the beginning we see that God’s plan has never changed.

(Heb 13:8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

(James 1:17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

The Lord Jesus criticised the deviations that man introduced and commanding people to “go back God’s basic plan” (refer to Mathew 19:3-8).

GOD’S DIVINE PLAN FOR PRIESTHOOD.

[1] The First Born To Be Consecrated to God

(Exo 13:2) "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine."

We observe from the above verse three basic principals:

- (a) God selects whomever He desires, He appoints and NOT us
- (b) Those whom He selects, He selects for Himself, to Share in God's Portion.
- (c) Those whom He selects, He Consecrates.

[2] Then He Substituted The First Born For Aaron and His Descendants.

He selected Aaron and his descendants in exchange for the First Born. The principal of priesthood remained the same, those who were called , were substituted by others.

This is why priests in the Old Testament, had no portion in the Land allocation. As God's own, they were fed from God's own portion, i.e. from the offerings essentially given to God.

[3] God Did Not Stop At Their Selection But Ordered Moses To Anoint Them In A Holy Gathering.

(Lev 8:12) And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him, to consecrate him.

The consecration and anointing procedures took place in a holy place of worship, where a sacrifice was offered to God. Also God ordered special robes and attire to be made for the priests to wear.

(Exo 40:12-15) "Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of meeting and wash them with water. {13} "You shall put the holy garments on Aaron, and anoint him and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest. {14} "And you shall bring his sons and clothe them with tunics. {15} "You shall anoint them, as you anointed their

father, that they may minister to Me as priests; for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations."

[4] God Commissions Moses To Ordain Them

I stand in awe and amazement at the honour God bestows on His vicars.

He selected Aaron and his sons to be priests for His Service, but they were not commissioned until such time they were passed under the hand of Moses His vicar, who was ordained by God as the custodian of the House of God.

(Num 12:7) Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house.

Moses sanctified them for God, and anointed them with the holy anointing, and made the priesthood eternal.

Do you think that this matter happen only in the Old Testament? We will see later on many examples from the New Testament as well.

[5] A Pure Gold Name Plate To Be Placed on Aaron's Forehead to Distinguish Them

(Exo 28:38) "So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.

It is remarkable to observe that wearing this "Sanctification Name Tag" was a means by which obtains God's acceptance.

We also note that the robes of Aaron and his sons were called Holy robes.

(Exo 28:2-3) "And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. {3} "So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.

(Exo 28:40) "For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty.

Is it possible to think that God would single out the Old Testament servants with all this care, robing them with honour and glory but would not care about the importance and the necessity of His New Testament servants.

[6] They Received The Holy Spirit By being Anointed

(Isa 61:1) "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

So the Anointing is linked with pouring of the Holy Spirit.

Hence, those anointed, receive the Holy Spirit which bestows authority to carry out the ministry of the priesthood.

In the New Testament the Lord substituted the anointing with the "Laying on of hands" and the "Holy Breath".

(John 20:22) And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

(Heb 6:2) of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

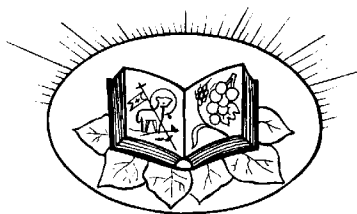
[7] God Publicly Declares That Priesthood Is Not For All, But Only For The Chosen

When Korah and Dathan and Abeeram revolted against the priesthood under the guise that the whole nation is a “sanctified unity”, but God made very clear when Moses said to them:

(Num 16:5) and he spoke to Korah and all his company, saying, "Tomorrow morning the LORD will show who is His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near to Him. That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him.

Here Moses describes a priest as; “*That one whom He chooses He will cause to come near to Him*”.

And God chose His priest but as for those who protested against the priesthood, “the earth opened its mount and swallowed them up.”



PRIESTHOOD IS A CALLING AND A MISSION

[8] Priesthood As An Anointing And A Mission

Here the Scriptures declare;

(Isa 61:1) "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

Here the Anointing preceded the mission...

Whoever is not sent by God, their works are futile

(Jer 23:32) "Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams," says the LORD, "and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all," says the LORD.

[9] The Calling, Selection, the Anointing and Commissioning are also found in the New Testament.

The Call

(Mat 10:1) And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

(Mat 10:5) These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.

Hence there is specific and selective calling for mission.

The Mission

(Luke 9:1-2) Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. {2} He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.

(Luke 10:1) After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

The Lord described their mission as of His own:

(John 20:21) So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

(John 17:18) "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

The Lord also confirmed the necessity of this mission when He said:

(Mat 9:38) "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

The Selection

The Lord Spoke of the selection saying

(John 15:16) "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

Hence there is a process of selection and mission, so that no one can appoint himself, but only those who are called from God such as Aaron.

[10] Christ Specified The Place And Type Of Mission, So As Not To Work Independently

At first He said to them;

(Mat 10:5-6) These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. {6} "But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Then finally He said;

(Acts 1:8) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

When God selected Saint Paul, He sent him to the Gentiles.

As for the type of work, the Lord Said to them;

(Mat 28:19-20) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, {20} "teaching them to observe all

things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

(Mark 16:15-16) And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. {16} "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

Here we find out of their specific mission and duties of preaching, making disciples, baptising and to hand over what they received from the Lord.

PRIESTHOOD IS A SPECIFIC CALLING

[11] In The Transitional Period Between The Old And New Testaments John the Baptist Was Commissioned by God

(John 1:6-7) There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. {7} This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.

[12] John The Baptist Was Sent For A Specific Mission.

John the Baptist's mission was to witness and prepare the way for the Lord, and not for offering sacrifices.

We notice how the Scriptures specified the duties of his mission;

(Luke 1:17) "He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

(Mark 1:2-4) As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You." {3} "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'" {4} John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

[13] If Priesthood Is A Specific Calling, Selection And A Mission From God, Then It Is Not For Every Person, But For Those Selected And Called By God.

In God's Kingdom, and as the Sovereign King, selects His servants. He calls and commissions them so that they would not work on their own but according to His command.

(Exo 25:9) "According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.

This commandment, did not only apply to apostolic rank only, but to their successors the bishops as well. Here we see Saint Paul commanding the bishops at Ephesus;

(Acts 20:28) "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

[14] The Bishops Are Successors To The Apostles

The bishops were the successors to the Apostles who were appointed by the Holy Spirit as shepherds. The Holy Spirit appoints and commissions. This is why the Lord Jesus said;

(Mat 9:38) "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

THE HOLY BREATH

The Lord Jesus ordained His disciples granting them the Holy Spirit and the Episcopal Authority. The Lord describes such ordination as:

(John 20:20-23) When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. {21} So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." {22} And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. {23} "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

[15] This Holy Breath Still Upheld And Is Handed Over From Generation To Generation

In the ordination of priests, the ordained opens his mouth while the chief priest (bishop) breathes on him and says, "Receive the Holy Spirit". The new priest then recites a portion from psalm 119 which says "I opened my mouth and for myself, I attracted a Spirit".

[16] By The Laying Of Their Hands, The Apostles Ordained Bishops, Priests And Deacons and Gave Them The Holy Spirit

Laying on of the hands on specific people shows that the priesthood is not for all. Refer to Acts Chapter 6, on how the seven deacons were ordained.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

[17] The Deacons Were Not Canonical Until The Disciples Laid Their Hands On Them

When the Church needed the service of the new deacons, did they volunteer themselves, or submit an application to be appointed?

It is obvious that this was never the case, but we see that the apostles set the rule for selection as stated by the Book of Acts;

(Acts 6:3) "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

Here we should also ask a couple of questions

- 1) Was it sufficient to just select the most qualified?
- 2) Did any say; "here we found and elected the most qualified, let them start serving?"

We see that non of the elected were authorised to commence their work until the apostles had laid their hands on them.

Even the deaconship, no one can carry out its duties without canonical ordination.

(Acts 6:5) And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and

Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,

Stephen was not only full of the Holy Spirit, but he was also full of faith, however he still needed ordination.

Stephen was a miracle performer with the gift of healing, but still required the “Laying on of Hands”.

(Acts 6:8) And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

[18] The Church Is Of Principal Importance As The Only Channel To Canonise The Ministers

Here we see that the being full of the Spirit and wisdom, full of faith and power, capable of performing miracles did not automatically admit Saint Stephen to assume the grade and the duties of deaconship. He had to first be canonised and sent by the Church. He had to receive the “Laying on of Hands” to assume his office and obtain the authority to serve.

Hence it is not for those who desire it or those who seek after the position.

[19] The Laying On Of Hands Was Carried Out By The Apostles And Not By The Congregation

Here we see that the “Laying on of Hands” was not a congregational matter, but rather hierarchical and apostolic.

(Acts 6:6) whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

Was it possible for any of these candidates full of the Holy Spirit and Wisdom dare say “We are all Kings and Priests?” as regrettably uttered, nowadays, by some less worthy to Saint Stephen.

It is remarkable to observe these deserving and highly qualified candidates submitted to the scriptural truth in order to receive this gift from the Church hierarchy and the apostles who said: “whom we may appoint over this business”

[20] Qualifications And Talents Are Not A Substitution For The Priestly Authority

Qualifications and talents and gifts do not suffice for the mission.

Saint Stephen was a great preacher as well as a learned scholar in the Word of God and was capable of debating and convincing all the assemblies, which resisted him;

(Acts 6:10) And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.

But this talent and ability needed legitimisation by the Church as uttered by Saint Paul:

(Rom 10:15) And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

This is also what Christ the Chief Priest said to His disciples:

(John 20:21) So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

And in the same way they were sent, they in turn sent the other servants, passing on to them the same Spirit and authority. Hence, the “Laying on of hands” flowed uninterrupted from one generation to the next.

[21] Laying On Of Hands Is Not Limited To The Ordination Of Deacons, But Also To Higher Offices

Saint Paul the great apostle saw Christ on the road to Damascus, and was called chosen vessel.

(Acts 9:15) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

Saint Paul was not only called by the Son, but also by the Father Himself:

(Gal 1:15-16) But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, {16} to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,

As well Saint Paul was also selected and called by the Holy Spirit:

(Acts 13:2) As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Even though Saint Paul was selected by the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he did not assume his service until he gained approval through the legitimate channels of the Church, and “The Laying On Of hands”.

The Holy Spirit called Paul and Barnabas to serve, and indeed the Holy Spirit did not want to send them until they received the “Laying on of Hands”

(Acts 13:2) As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Reading the above verse one could ask God, “Lord why didn't You send them Yourself”? Who are we, but servants selected by You as You selected them. What do You mean by saying “*Now separate to Me*”? Who are we to “separate for you”? Since you are the Sovereign, You could have sent them as You wish.

But God still says that, “Even if I called them, you are the legal channels which I appointed, you are the stewards of My Mysteries.”

(1 Cor 4:1) Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Here I reiterate, It was necessary for these apostles, called by the Spirit, to go first via the Church, even if they were called directly by God. It was necessary for them to receive the Laying on of Hands from the apostolic authority in the Church, i.e. from God's vicars'.

Did Saul of Tarsus argue against the authority of the Church. Did he ever say “We are all kings and Priests”? ... Did he object saying “But I am a selected vessel called by the Holy Spirit and separated by God from my mother's womb” ?

Definitely not, but on the contrary, Saul in humility, bowed his head, to receive the apostolic ‘Laying on of Hands’ from the apostles who preceded him, in obedience to the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 13:3) Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Their commission by the Church was considered as that of the Holy Spirit:

(Acts 13:4) So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Hence the “Laying on of Hands” is also a prerequisite for the new apostles as much as it is for the deacon.

The “Laying on of Hands” was for exclusively performed by the apostles and not for the congregation in general.

The Holy Spirit also addressed the apostles and not the congregation.

[22] The Laying On Of Hands Was Accompanied by Fasting And Praying

They did not only “Lay on the Hands” but they also fasted and prayed. It is obvious that such prayers were the first canonical rites of ordinations (the liturgical prayers).

The Scriptures tell us about the appointment of saint Paul and saint Barnabas:

(Acts 14:23) So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

This is why we fast and conduct a liturgical prayer as part of the ordination rites.

[23] Laying On Of Hands Was Accompanied by Special Utterance Commensurate To The Grade

This is an obvious matter. The Lord Jesus Christ, uttered special and holy utterance when He ordained the Apostles granting them the Spirit and priesthood:

(John 20:20-23) When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. {21} So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." {22} And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. {23} "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (Mat 16:18) "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

(Mat 18:18) "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

[24] The Sentence “Now Separate To Me” Denotes That Priesthood Is For A Select Group And Not For All

Those “Separated for God” received the calling, the selection, the commission and the “Laying on of Hands” which was symbolised by the holy anointing in the Old Testament.

The Lord called the Apostles Himself, He sent them Himself, He granted the Authority by Himself and He entrusted the Church to them.

In turn, they commissioned and sent others handing over to their successors the same authority. Had this not occurred, the Church would have withered away after the first generation. But the church proceeded forward from the apostolic era, to continue its service, mission, authority and laying of hands from one generation to the next.

THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION AND THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

Saint Paul laid his hands on many, and included Saint Timothy the bishop and Saint Titus the bishop. He said to Saint Timothy:

(2 Tim 1:6) Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

It is clear that God’s gift was passed on from Saint Paul to his disciple Timothy.

Also Timothy passed on this gift to others, by “Laying on of the Hands”. We could read Saint Paul advising him:

(1 Tim 5:22) Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

This meant that Saint Timothy should not to grant the priesthood hastily, via laying on of hands, to those unworthy, otherwise he would share in their punishment.

This “laying on of hands” was carried out in all nations, until our time which we have received, is the same priesthood granted by the Lord to His disciples.



CHAPTER 3

DOES PRIESTHOOD CONTRADICT EQUALITY AMONG THE FAITHFUL?

Those who object to priesthood seem to confuse equality with role and variance in responsibility and grade of the different services.

They see a contradiction between levels of responsibility and equality in sonship to Christ.

They claim that the selection and anointing of a selective group of people is a character of the Old Testament. In this section we will show that God does not change His way with Man.

(James 1:17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

THE THIRD OBJECTION

Those who object against the idea of priesthood, say that we are all equal. They support their arguments with various verses from which we are going to take a sample.

(Gal 3:28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

(Mat 20:25-28) But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. {26} "Yet it

shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. {27} "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave; {28} "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

RESPONSE TO THE THIRD OBJECTION

[1] Equality In Sonship Allows For Authority And Variations In Roles

We do not deny that all the faithful are equal being the sons of God, and that all are temples of the Holy Spirit. We also do not differentiate on basis of their ethnic background, colour, gender or their moral responsibility.

But all this does not negate that they could differ in roles, hence such argument does not support that all should be priests.

[2] In What Context Was (Galatians 3:28) said?

This statement was aimed at our new life which adorns us in Christ Jesus and our new faith and baptism.

(Gal 3:26-28) For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. {27} For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. {28} There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Hence there is no differentiation between the baptised faithful, as sons and daughters of God.

In such sonship, there are no Greek nor Jew, no free man nor slave. etc.

[3] While Equality There Is In The Sonship, The Scriptures Declares Differences between the Roles of Men And Women

There is difference between a male nor female in God's sonship and baptism, but this did not prevent the Scriptures from differentiating between them with respect to their role.

(1 Cor 11:3) But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

(Eph 5:22-23) Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. {23} For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

(Col 3:18) Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

(1 Pet 3:6) as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

[4] While There Is Equality In The Sonship, The Scriptures Did Not Negate The Differences In The free, and the bound.

While there are no slaves or master in Christ, but the Lord Jesus said:

(John 13:16) "Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

And the apostle says:

(Eph 6:5-7) Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; {6} not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, {7} with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men,

(Col 3:22) Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

There is no difference between Philemon and Onesimus with regards to baptism and faith, but Saint Paul found himself obliged to obtain Philemon's permission before granting freedom to Onesimus:

(Phile 1:14) But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary.

[5] While There Is Equality In The Sonship, The Primacy Of The Jews was Preserved By The Scriptures

Saint Paul Said:

(Rom 9:4-5) who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; {5} of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

And at the same time, he says about equality in the sonship of God:

(1 Cor 12:13) For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

[6] It Is Important To Read Any Verse In The Context It Was Written

So as we seen above, it is important to understand the context in which the words were used. As it is not correct to take Galatians 3:28, and use it out of context.

[7] The Lord's Call To Take the Last Place for ourselves.

Here we refer to Matthew 20:25-28

(Mat 20:25-28) But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. {26} "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. {27} "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave; {28} "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Here the Lord Jesus talked about the subject of humility, and not about priesthood. For He did not want His disciples to be haughty or proud.

[8] Christ In His Humility Never Loses His Primacy

Christ gives us Himself as an example of humility;

(John 13:13-14) "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. {14} "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

He also said that the Son of Man came to serve and not to be served.

Can any one challenge Christ's supremacy and primacy over the Creation or His disciples because of His humility. He came to serve, but while He served He was still the Master.

[9] Christ's Call For Humility Does Not Abolish Priesthood

Christ wants His priests to be humble. But there is no need to abolish the rank of priesthood to achieve this.

Humility is a prerequisite for priesthood. It is not permissible for a priest to be haughty and proud. The priest should be humble, and should not set himself above his flock. God's gift of primacy should not be used as a license for pride and supremacy. A priest should deal with the flock as if he is the least among them and the servant of all.

[10] A Priest Should Remember the Advice given to King Rehoboam By The Wise men

(1 Ki 12:7) And they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

So if the king is called upon to be a servant to his flock, so should the priest.

THE FOURTH OBJECTION

[11] Those Who Object to Priesthood, Also Refer To Joel's Prophecy

(Joel 2:28) "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions.

They argue that the special ordination of the priesthood is against this universal gift of the Holy Spirit.

[12] There Is A Difference Between Gifts Of The Spirit And Priesthood

The gifts mentioned by Saint Paul in 1Cor 12, indicate that while gifts are available to all, priesthood is not. Therefore, not all gifts are equal.

(1 Cor 12:7-11) But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: {8} for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, {9} to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, {10} to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. {11} But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.

ALL ARE NOT EQUAL

[13] Are All The Same?

In God's Kingdom, while all are equal in sonship with God and in moral responsibility, but they are not equal in gifts, responsibilities, roles and priesthood.

[14] Here Is The Scriptural Teaching On Differentiation Between The Faithful

(1 Cor 12:28-29) And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. {29} Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?

On the light of the above, there is no case for those who oppose the priesthood, who base their objections on the argument of "Equality".

[15] The Differentiation Between Roles Is Also Declared In The Epistle To The Ephesians

(Eph 4:11-12) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

[16] Some And Not All Are Selected

It is obvious from the above that God has selected specific people for specific tasks. It goes without saying, that not all are selected or equal in their responsibility.

Hence we see that God has assigned priesthood to some and not all.

THE CLERGY ARE SELECTED MEN ASSIGNED SPECIAL TASKS

[17] The Selected Men Of The Lord

We read in the Gospel:

(Luke 16:12-13) "And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? {13} "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

(Luke 10:1) After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

From the above one can deduce the following:

- 1 Priesthood is a divine plan.
- 2 Priesthood was established by the Lord Himself.
- 3 He started with the Apostles, assigning them the work, and the place.

4 He also blessed them and granted them a special authority as found in Matthew 10:1.

(Mat 10:1) And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

[18] Christ Also Blessed Who Accepts the Disciples and Punishment For People Who Reject Or Despise Them

(Mat 10:40) "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

(Luke 10:16) "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

(Luke 10:10-12) "But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, {11} 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' {12} "But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city.

[19] He Has Also Assigned To Them The Authority To Teach And To Baptise

(Mat 28:19-20) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, {20} "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

(Mark 16:15NKJV) And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

The assignment to baptise and to teach was given to the apostles and not to everyone.

He also said:

(Luke 10:16) "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

The commission was not for the congregation.

[20] Saint Peter Confirms That Such Authority Is Not For The Congregation But For The Apostles

(Acts 10:41-42) "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. {42} "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

How remarkable is the expression ("*not to all the people*), for not every one is permitted for the service of spreading the Word of God. Such matters are reserved for a special rank of people entrusted by the Lord. As for the rest of the congregation, they should abide with the scriptural utterance:

(Rom 10:15) And how shall they preach unless they are sent?

We will detail this point later on when we deal with the topic of priesthood and teaching.

The ministry of baptism was also a specific command to the apostles and their successors and not for everyone.

[21] Also He Singled Them Out and Gave Them The Authority to Absolve And Bind

(Mat 16:19) "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

(Mat 18:18) "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

(John 20:22-23) And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. {23} "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

[22] He Also Granted Them The Authority To Carry Out The Sacrament Of The Eucharist

Again the Lord singled them out, and did not give such authority to the congregation:

(Luke 22:19) And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

Saint Paul when addressing this matter he said:

(1 Cor 10:16) The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

Saint Paul says, “which we bless” and not what “you bless”, also “which we break” and not what “you break”.

But as for partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, Saint Paul clearly declares that it is for all the congregation:

(1 Cor 10:21) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

The Apostles were the only ones empowered to carry out this Sacrament, as the first fruit of the priesthood.

[23] They Were Singled Out To Carry Out The Ministry Of Laying On Of Hands And To Appoint Servants

As we see from the succeeding verses that the “Laying on of Hands” was only assigned to the apostles and their successors.

(a) In the ordination of the seven deacons

(Acts 6:3-6) "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; {4} "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." {5} And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, {6} whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

If all were priests, what was the need for the disciples to perform the “Laying on of Hands”?

(b) Saint Paul exhorts his disciple bishop Timothy;

(2 Tim 1:6) Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

(c) He also says to bishop Timothy

(1 Tim 5:22) Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

If all were clergy (priests) why the laying on of hands?

(d) Also Saint Paul instructs His disciple Titus

(Titus 1:5) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders (priests) in every city as I commanded you;

If everyone in the congregation had the function of a priest, why would Saint Paul issue such instruction?

(e) How about what Saint Paul said about Timothy's method of ordination?

(1 Tim 4:14) Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

It is noted that the Protestant denominations wrongly use the word (elder) to denote a priest, while this word was usually used to denote the apostles and the bishops, this is clear from the following verses

(1 Pet 5:1) The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed:

(2 John 1:1) THE ELDER, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth,

(3 John 1:1) THE ELDER, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:

We can see from the above that “Laying on of Hands” was necessary for all grades of priesthood, it was not for every one but for the apostles, their bishops and their successors.

[24] The Holy Spirit Was Only Given Through The Laying On Of Their Hands

(a) We notice when the Samaritan believed, and were baptised but were not given the Holy Spirit. It was necessary for Saint Peter and Saint John to go to them to grant the Samaritans the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 8:14-17) Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, {15} who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. {16} For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. {17} Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

If all were priests and bishops why did this happen? It would have been possible for any of the faithful to carry out this duty, without any need for the 2 apostles to go to them!

(b) We also note the same for the new converts at Ephesus. These converts knew nothing about the Holy Spirit, but received It through Saint Paul's laying his hands on them;

(Acts 19:6) And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

We can see that the Holy Unction was only given by the apostles. This duty was the duty of the apostles and not the congregation. The Holy Unction is referred to in 1John 2.

(1 John 2:20) But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.

(1 John 2:27) But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.

Even Simon the sorcerer was aware of the special gift given exclusively to the apostles, he even wrongly thought that he could purchase such gift with money.

(Acts 8:18) And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,

If priesthood was a common gift of all, why would he try to purchase such a gift?

[25] The Apostles Were Singled Out For Rulers and Guidance

Saint Paul reminds us in the epistle to the Hebrews saying:

(Heb 13:7) Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.

Here he is singling out the “rulers” as a special group of people, who would give an account to God about the outcome of their conduct. It is obvious these words were not to mean that all the congregations were rulers, but only a few.

[26] Saint Paul asked the congregation that they Admonish and Esteem those who have laboured for them.

(1 Th 5:12-13) And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, {13} and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

[27] If Priesthood Was For All, Why Announce Special Requirements For Bishops, Priests And Deacons

While some of the qualifications for the clergy include some general spiritual virtues, which are good for all, there are some specific prerequisites aimed at this special office in the Church.

(1 Tim 3:12) Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

(1 Tim 3:10) But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

(1 Tim 3:2) A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

(1 Tim 3:6-7) not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. {7} Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

And for the priest:

(Titus 1:6) if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

If all were priests, why require such prerequisites.

[28] Why The Laying On Of Hands, Prayers, Fasting And Holy Utterance?

In the ordination of Saul and Barnabas we see that:

(Acts 13:3) Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Also in ordaining the Deacons:

(Acts 6:6) whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

Why Laying On Of Hands, Prayers, Fasting And Utterance, if all are equal?

And why elect seven deacons if all are equal?

(Acts 6:3) "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

[29] If Priesthood Was For All Why Did Christ Assign Baptism, The Unction, The Laying On Of Hands To A Special Group?

In the light of all the above biblical examples, we see that not everyone was authorised by Christ to carry out all the ecclesiastical duties, which included absolution, binding, forgiveness of sins and conducting the sacrament of the Eucharist.

[30] Why Did God Send Peter To Baptise Cornelius?

If every one was authorised to carry out the function, why was Cornelius not baptised by any of the Christians? Why call Saint Peter from Jafa?

(Acts 10:5-6) "Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter. {6} "He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

(Acts 10:20) "Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."

Here we see that God ordered, and His orders were carried to Peter by an angel, and in turn Peter fulfilled his responsibility.

[31] Why Did God Assign Ananias To Baptise Saul

(Acts 9:6, 10,11, 17, 18) {6} So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ...{10} Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ...{11} So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. ... {17} And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ...{18} Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

Although Saul met Christ personally and believed. He still had to be baptised by Ananias.

And here we may ask the question; Why Ananias? Why not any other Christian if all were priests?

IN CONCLUSION

Here we reiterate what Saint Paul said about the Christian Priesthood:

(Heb 5:4) And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was.

This is the biblical truth, for those who want to know the correct biblical truth:

(Mat 13:43) " He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

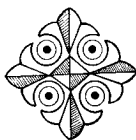
Let no one think that the post of priesthood in the New Testament is a public property for all. Priesthood, as in the Old Testament, is still set aside for a special group. This group is called, anointed, selected, sent, ordained, prayed upon, received the Laying on of Hands and are subject to special conditions and must fulfil special criterion.

These special people are assigned duties, which are not given to anyone else to perform.

The Lord Has granted them:

- ◆ Authority to baptise
- ◆ Authority to teach
- ◆ Authority to absolve and bind
- ◆ Authority to rule the Church
- ◆ Authority to Lay on the Hands to ordain the clergy and the servants
- ◆ Authority to be the vicars of His Mysteries (1 Co 4:1)
- ◆ Authority to give the Holy Spirit to the Faithful

The priests are also not limited to only offering the Eucharist as some people wrongly claim.



CHAPTER 4

RESPONSIBILITIES, TITLES AND RANKS OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Responsibilities and Titles

Vicars	Ambassadors	Angels
Shepherds	Fathers	Teachers
Guides	Rulers	Priests

Ranks

Apostles	Bishops	Priests
Deacons		

In this chapter we will discuss the necessity for the above responsibilities, titles and ranks, assigned the office of priesthood.

For example:

- If all the faithful were vicars, whom will they deputise?
- If all were shepherds, so who would be the flock?
- If all were fathers, whom would be their sons?
- If all were teachers, who would be the disciples? And so on with the rest of the responsibilities.

It is evident that the men of the priesthood, are a specific group with specific and exclusive responsibilities.

We see also that the Scriptures negate the notion that the entire congregations were bishops, priests and deacons.

Through the following pages we will discuss each of the Nine responsibilities. Our discussion will be consistently supported with biblical quotations.

VICARS (STEWARDS)

[1] Christ Called The Twelve “Vicars”

The twelve disciples were called vicars in the parable of the vigilant servant.

Christ uttered this in response to a specific question by Saint Peter:

(Luke 12:42) And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?"

The Lord classified his flock in two categories, His vicars and the members of His flock. The vicar takes on the responsibility during His Master's absence. It is also clear from the above verse, that the appointment of the vicar was carried out by his Master, and his duties and responsibilities were also set out by the Master.

[2] Here We See Differentiation, Not all are Vicars and Not All Are Not On The Same Footing.

The vicar himself is still in the eyes of the Master a servant:

(Luke 12:43) "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes."

But this servant holds a distinctive and separate role. He is charged with the responsibility of caring for the congregation and answerable to the Master.

[3] Vicars Are Needed Continually To Provide The Spiritual Nourishment.

One of the duties of a vicar is to provide spiritual nourishment for the flock. As long as Christ maintains a flock, it follows that He will perpetually appoint vicars to spiritually feed this flock.

Such vicars must continue to carry out this role until the Master returns and finds them doing so.

[4] Would It Be Right to Claim That Every Faithful Is a Vicar for God?

Such claim has no credibility, even if some may revolt or claim that “we are all kings and priests”.

It is rather fitting to be humble and accept God’s own plan for His Church, to become subject to those vicars, who were appointed by the Lord, knowing that if they were to neglect their duties, the Lord would severely reprimand them:

(Luke 12:46) "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

[5] The Vicarship Is Not Limited To The Twelve

Saint Paul and his helpers were vicars as well:

(1 Cor 4:1-2) Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. {2} Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

[6] God Has Appointed His Own Mysteries And Assigned Vicars To Serve These Mysteries.

(1 Cor 4:6) Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.

The discourse following the above verse shows the obvious ranking in the Church of God.

[7] Saint Paul Did Not Only Limit His Vicarship To God's Mysteries, But Also Extended It To The Authority To Teach

(1 Cor 9:16-17) For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! {17} For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

[8] So It Is Not For Every One To Imitate Saint Paul Saying "Woe Is Me If I Do Not Preach The Gospel" Unless One has Been Entrusted With this Stewardship

Some may say "but what would I do about my zeal and desire to evangelise to others about Christ?"

I would say that such zeal and desire is great and commendable, but you must channel your zeal through the Church.

The Church is empowered to grant you the grade of deaconship. So come and legitimise your mission and calling.

But somebody may find it cumbersome to take this road of legitimisation. Here I reiterate the Scriptural truth for such person:

(Rom 10:14-15) How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? {15} And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

[9] The Vicarship Is Not Limited To The Twelve Disciples and to Saint Paul, But It Is Also Part Of The Bishop's Titles

(Titus 1:7) For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

Here we see that the Lord Jesus established the vine and appointed vicars for it (Matt 20:8). These vicars were the apostles, who were commissioned by the Lord as were the prophets (Jer 1:10) previously

The apostles ordained bishops who were scripturally called vicars (Titus 1:7), and in turn these bishops ordained priests and deacons.

[10] These Workers were Delegated to Operate Under God's Guidance, Name and Sovereignty.

It is obvious the Christ commissioned His Vicars to represent Him on Earth.

(Mat 10:40) "He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.

(Luke 10:16) "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

This takes us to discuss their mission as:

AMBASSADORS

Saint Paul in the second epistle to the Corinthians makes it abundantly clear that Christ empowered certain people to be His ambassadors and to continue the service of reconciliation with God.

(2 Cor 5:18) Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

The work of reconciliation is a perpetual function, since man continues to separate himself from God by committing sin. So Christ assigned the function of reconciliation to the clergy, His vicars, who are commissioned to go to people and exhort them saying : "Be Reconciled With God"

Such commission is coupled with delivering the Word of God to the people, as God's ambassadors:

(Eph 6:20) for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

ANGELS & MESSANGERS

[1] This Is One Of The Titles Of The Clergy. It Was Clearly Given To John The Baptist. The Priest Of The Transitional Era Between The Two Testaments

John the Baptist, the priest and son of Zacharias was so called; “messenger”:

(Mal 3:1) "Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts.

(Mark 1:2) As it is written in the Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You."

An angel is a messenger from heaven to earth. Saint Paul describes the angels as follows:

(Heb 1:14) Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

So the clergy, are they not messengers, sent to serve the ones who will inherit salvation.

[2] The Title of Angel Was Given To The Bishops Of The Seven Churches In The Book Of Revelations

We note that Our Lord Jesus was the one who uttered this title:

(Rev 2:1) "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, "These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

It is evident that not all the believers could be called “angels” or vicars of the Church, so they should not think of themselves more highly than they ought to.

(Rom 12:3) For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

[3] But Some May Ask How Can We Call The Bishops, Angels While They Are Not Infallible

The Lord called the bishops “angels” and at the same place in the book of Revelation, He exposes and enumerates their mistakes?

So those who object, are objecting of the Lord Himself.

The Lord admonishes the angel of the Church of Ephesos saying;

(Rev 2:5) "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place; unless you repent.

Also to angel of the Church of Sardis He says

(Rev 3:1) "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

This was addressed to the angel of the Church who fell to a very regrettable state.

Also the Angel of the Church of Laodiceans, received the same admonition:

(Rev 3:16) "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."

- (a) We should differentiate between the priestly office and the behaviour or conduct of its bearer.**
- (b) The office of a priest does not mend Man's sinful state**
- (c) While we believe in the authority of the priesthood, we do not subscribe or believe in the teaching of priesthood infallibility.**

[4] Infallibility Is For God Alone He Is The Just Judge He Is The Only Judge of Behaviour

(Rom 14:4) Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

(Rev 2:23) "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works."

[5] So If You Stumbled Through The Fault Of A Clergyman, then Remember The Following:

(James 5:17) Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

So Elijah who shut the skies from raining and subsequently opened it, was still under the same yoke of human weakness.

[6] Even Joshua Was Not Stripped From His Title of Chief Priest In Spite of His Sinful State

Here we see a chief priest who was in a state of sin was still regarded as a chief priest

(Zec 3:1-7) Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. {2} And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" {3} Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. {4} Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes." {5} And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the LORD stood by. {6} Then the Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying, {7} "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'If you will walk in My ways, And if you will keep My command, Then you shall also judge My

house, And likewise have charge of My courts; I will give you places to walk Among these who stand here.

Here we note the Lord did not strip him from his title, but rather helped this chief priest to repent.

As the priest is the angel of the church, he is robed in white during the services. He should be as pure as an angel. But even if he committed a sin he is still the angel of the church.

[7] King Saul Retained His Title As “The Anointed of God” In Spite of His Sinful State

Samuel the prophet anointed Saul to be a king over Israel. From this point onward Saul retained this title, in spite of his sin and after being rejected by God. (1 Sam 16:14) and afflicted with an evil spirit (1 Sam 16:23).

Saul persecuted David wanting to kill him. But David never forgot the fact that Saul is “the Anointed of God”, and rebuked his men when they implored him to kill Saul who fell in his hands.

(1 Sam 24:6) And he said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do this thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD."

David's love and respect for Saul extended even after Saul's death.

He rebuked the man who killed Saul saying:

(2 Sam 1:14) So David said to him, "How was it you were not afraid to put forth your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?"

Here we observe how Saul's title "the Anointed of God" was not removed from him, even though God had rejected him because of the multitude of his sins.

SHEPHERDS

According to the Scriptures, the apostles and the bishops are "Shepherds".

The Lord commanded Simon Peter saying:

(John 21:15-16) "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." {16} He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep."

Also Saint Paul used the same title to address the bishops at Ephesus:

(Acts 20:28) "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

Here we see that Saint Paul directly links a bishop to the title of a shepherd.

Also Saint Peter addressing the bishops in Diaspora as follows:

(1 Pet 5:2-4) Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers¹, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; {3} nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; {4} and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

And Saint Paul in divvying up the ecclesiastical titles and responsibilities, said:

(Eph 4:11-12) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

FATHERS

All office bearers of priesthood are called “fathers”. Some people object to this. These objectors base their view on;

(Mat 23:9) "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

For this we have set aside chapter five of this book to deal in detail with the issue of spiritual fatherhood of the priests.

¹ Here we note that the word “bishop” is literally translated “Overseer”

TEACHERS

The authority to teach is not for everyone, but for those granted such authority:

(Rom 12:7) or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching;

Saint Paul also said:

(1 Cor 12:28) And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

Here we see an important link between the work of the shepherds and teaching. We observe also the prerequisite for a bishop is to be fit to teach.

(1 Tim 3:2) A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

Also in Saint Paul's epistle to Titus said;

(Titus 2:1) But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine:

He also implores Saint Timothy the bishop of Ephesus:

(1 Tim 4:16) Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

(2 Tim 4:2) Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

Teaching has been synonymous with priesthood even in the Old Testament (Malachi 2:7). In the New Testament teaching has been the duty of the apostles, bishops and the clergy.

The Lord Jesus Christ has assigned the work of teaching to the apostles:

(Mat 28:19-20) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, {20} "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

(Mark 16:15) And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

And the apostles, in turn, handed over this responsibility to the bishops and ordered them to teach the congregation.

The bishops ordained priests and deacons to be faithful teachers. We see Saint Paul speak about the priests as teachers;

(1 Tim 5:17) Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

We still uphold the teaching of Malachi;

(Mal 2:7) "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."

It is amazing to read that the priest is described as "*the messenger of the LORD of hosts*"

Therefore a priest is not limited to the service of offering the sacrifice, but also his most important duty is to propagate the law of God to the congregation, both in the New and Old Testaments.

What About Those People who want To Derive Their Knowledge Directly From The Spirit?

Some want to bypass the Church, assuming that each person, can have their direct encounter with the Holy Spirit. Such people are misinterpreting the verse:

(John 6:45) "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me."

But if God intended that all of us be self taught directly from Him, why is it then that He gave some to be teachers (1Cor 12:28)? Whom would they then teach if we are destined to be self taught?

(Eph 4:11) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,
And why did God appoint teachers?

(1 Cor 12:28) And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

And if all were to be directly tutored by the Holy Spirit, why would God exhort the bishops to teach?

(1 Tim 4:16) Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

And why did God exhort missionary work?

(2 Tim 4:2) Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

One should understand “You shall be taught by God” in the above verse (John 6:45) in the light of (Luke 10:16):

(Luke 10:16) "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."

This means that teaching emanates from God, and His law proceeds from the priest's mouth and not through heretics, false prophets or from pretend teachers.

If you learn from God's vicar, you learn from God Himself who said to His vicars:

(Mat 10:20) "for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

A form of hidden pride is for a believer to wait for God to directly teach him in any and every matter, assuming that every person in the congregation is a prophet of God.

It is evident that the spirit of the devil can deceive such people.

We also see our teacher Saint John the beloved explicitly warning us not to believe every spirit, but rather to be on guard:

(1 John 4:1) Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

I suppose that we do not need to labour this point in great depth, as we see that even among the Evangelical denominations, have teachers who must be accredited by their denominational system.

But How About the verse in Matt 23:9?

(Mat 23:9) "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

This saying was only directed to the disciples and not to every one, He never intended to eliminate teaching from the Church.

The same applies to God's instructions "Do not call anyone on earth your father " such instruction was also specific to the disciples and their successors. But as for the rest of the believers, they require shepherds and fathers.

It is obvious that some of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ were directed to the disciples and not all the congregation.

This is evident by the question of Saint Peter:

(Luke 12:41) Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?"

As for people who rely on one verse (usually out of context) we would ask them to consider God's admonition;

(Mat 22:29) Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Through every teaching we ought to understand the full meaning, and, without partiality or bigotry, and delve in the depth of what is intended:

(1 Cor 2:13) These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Here we should move forward to the matter of Guides and Rulers.

GUIDES AND RULERS

[1] Saint Paul Speaks About The Guides In Hebrews Chapter 13

(Heb 13:7) Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct.

[2] They Are Not Just Any Guides, But Men of faith and Responsibility Who Should Be respected and Obeyed

These guides who will give an account to God on the outcome of their conduct. It is obvious these words were not directed to all the congregations, but only a few.

(1 Th 5:12-13) And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, {13} and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Obviously this was a special group, which should be held up in a high stand, as spiritual fathers and obeyed.

[3] The Ruling Office Of The Priesthood

The following verse clarifies this point.

(1 Tim 5:17) Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

Rulership is translated “Hegemony” which is still a current ecclesiastical term. Also Saint Paul specifically singles out the rulers:

(1 Th 5:12) And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,

It is abundantly clear that these rulers and guides were a chosen group, accountable to the Lord. They were not of the laity but priests.

This leads us to the evangelical churches translation of the word “priest”

PRIESTS

[1] Clergy of All Grades Are Called Priests

For example, in the military, all are soldiers , but differ in rank from General to the Private.

[2] The Lord Jesus, The Chief Priest Is Referred To As Priest

(Heb 7:21) (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek'"),

(Psa 110:4) The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

He is also called a High Priest

(Heb 7:26) For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens;

(Heb 8:1) Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

(Heb 4:14) Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

(Heb 5:1) For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

(Heb 5:10) called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"

(Heb 8:3) For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.

[3] Saint Paul Is Called Priest

Saint Paul called himself a Priest on various occasions. The word Priest was repeated several times in the New Testament, but it is regrettable to report that our brethren of the Evangelical denominations have elected to replace the word with "Elder". The Roman Catholic Translation is more accurate.

SAMPLES OF THE METHODS OF TRANSLATION OF THE WORD PRIESTS
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Roman Catholic Translation	The Protestant Translation
<i>(1 Tim 5:17) Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.</i>	<i>(1 Tim 5:17) Let the priests who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine</i>
<i>(1 Tim 5:19) Do not receive an accusation against an</i>	<i>(1 Tim 5:19) Do not receive an accusation against a priest</i>

elder except from two or three witnesses.

*(Titus 1:5) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint **elders** in every city as I commanded you;*

*(James 5:14) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the **elders** of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

(1 Tim 4:14) Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.

except from two or three witnesses.

*(Titus 1:5) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint **priests** in every city as I commanded you;*

*(James 5:14) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the **priests** of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

(1 Tim 4:14) Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbetry.

NOTES & OBSERVATIONS

In an attempt to discredit the priesthood, our Protestant brethren translate the word ‘bishop’ or ‘priest’ to ‘elder’ and a deliberately attempt to confuse the grade of bishop with the grade of priest

Usually the word “Elder” is biblically reserved for the priesthood in general. So an Elder could be a priest or a bishop or a disciple.

(1 Pet 5:1-2) The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: {2} Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;

Here the command “*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you*”, definitely denotes that Saint Peter was addressing bishops with the responsibility of overseeing.

Also,

(2 John 1:1) THE ELDER, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth,

(3 John 1:1) THE ELDER, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:

The Roman Catholic translation uses the word “Pontiff “ and not “Elder”.

THE GRADES OF PRIESTHOOD

[1] By This We Mean The Ranks Granted Through The Laying On Of Hands

Such laying on of hands takes place with special liturgical prayers and fasting, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[2] All These Grades Are Biblical

The Scriptures clearly mentions three grades of priesthood, i.e. the bishop, the priest and the deacon. The Apostolic Canon defined the three grades as follows, the bishops are shepherds, the priests are teachers and the deacons are servants.

BISHOPS

[3] The First Bishops Were Our fathers The Holy Apostles

The apostles were universal bishops, and not local while Saint James was the local bishop for Jerusalem.

[4] The Lord Jesus Is Called Bishop

(1 Pet 2:25) For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

[5] It Is Fitting To Link Shepherdship With The Office Of The Bishop

The Lord Jesus called Himself, the Good Shepherd:

(John 10:11) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

He is the Shepherd and bishop of our souls. Bishops were delegated by Christ to carry out the bishopric office.

[6] The Apostles Were Also Bishops, Shepherds, or High Priests.

They were bishops according to their clerical office, and archbishops with respect to their hegemony over the other priests.

Also they are priests according to their clerical office, and high priests with respect to their hegemony over the other priests.

[7] The Bishops Are Also The Vicars Of God

(Titus 1:7) For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

This means that the apostles were also vicars for God through their bishopric office.

Saint Paul also described himself as God's vicar:

(1 Cor 4:1-2) Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. {2} Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

The apostles were bishops. This is because they were shepherds and vicars and because of the priestly nature of their work.

So the high priests of today are vicars to the Great High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ. They are shepherds and vicars to the Chief Shepherd.

(1 Pet 5:4) and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

They are then His vicars in shepherdship and the other priestly duties, for example, teaching and giving the sacraments etc.

It is obvious the all are not God's vicars, and all are not shepherds nor bishops. Hence we were not all priests as some are claim.

[8] The Scriptures Stipulates Certain Qualifications For The Bishop

(1 Tim 3:2-7) A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; {3} not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; {4} one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence {5} (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); {6} not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. {7} Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

(Titus 1:9) holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

(Titus 1:6) if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination.

[9] The Above Qualifications Are Naturally Not Prevalent In Every Congregational Member.

Not every person in any congregation can hold all the above qualifications, hence the grade of bishop is not for every congregational member.

[10] Some Say, Why are Today's Bishops Celibates?

Initially, marriage was permitted, to allow the suitable saints to become bishops, especially that these people were already married well before the rule of celibacy was canonised.

However we observe Saint Paul has enumerated the advantages of being celibate, for the service of the Lord:

(1 Cor 7:8) But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am;

(1 Cor 7:32) But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord; how he may please the Lord.

Celibacy was gradually accepted by the Church, and declared by the Church as one of the its Canons at the Council of Nicea (325AD).

PRIESTS

[11] Priests (elders) were Mentioned In The Book Of Acts

While Saint Paul and saint Barnabas were preaching in Lystra, Antioch and Iconium

(Acts 14:21-23) And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, {22} strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." {23} So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Here we note the liturgical prayers and fasting which accompanied the ordinations. The same was mentioned in the ordination of Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas.

(Acts 13:3) Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

It is noted that our Protestant brethren use the literal translation of "Presviteros" as a geriatric, while the ecclesiastical use of this word is clergy or "Priests", and this is how the Roman Catholics have translated it.

The word "Elder" is normally used by many religions to denote the religious orders.

[12] The Word Priest Was Also Used In Many Places

(Titus 1:5) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you;

(James 5:14) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

[13] So If All Were Equal; Why Call The Priest To Anoint The Sick?

If all were priests, why call the priests and not any of the faithful to administer the oil?

[14] How Does This Fit With The Protestant Teaching Of No Intermediary Between God And Man

How is it that our Protestant brethren believe that there should be no mediation between God and Man, while the Scriptures teaches us to call an intermediary to pray for the sick? Why shouldn't the sick pray and anoint themselves by themselves?

Please note that the verse called for a "priest" and not for some one with the gift of healing. Here the Scriptures speaks about a priestly office not a healing gift.

[15] We Also Reiterate First Timothy

(1 Tim 5:17) Let the elders (priests) who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

The word and doctrine were, since the apostolic age, entrusted to the apostles, their successors and helpers.

Here we also see that they were also "rulers" or hegomens.

[16] Our Evangelical brethren In Egypt Use The Title Priest (Kassis) And Not Elder (Sheik) For Their Pastors

Our Evangelical brethren use the word Priest without biblical differentiation between a Pastor and a Priest. And in the mean time they do not agree that the word Pastor or Priest carries with it any priestly rank.

This is also the practice of the Presbyterian denomination.

But the Plymouth do not use the word Pastor nor Priest, as all are in their eyes brethren, regardless of their office in the Church. They even call the apostles brethren!

But we believe in the priesthood and the rank of priests and bishops. This is as a result of the priestly office and work handed to them by the Lord.

Therefore, the matter is not a mere difference in translations or use of words. The principal difference is the priestly office, which differentiate between the office bearer and others.

- Is the office bearer the person to be called to anoint the sick?
- Is the office bearer entrusted by the Church to teach and to rule?
- Is the office bearer entrusted with the liturgy and baptism?
- Is the office bearer called by God like Aaron?

[17] Also The Plymouth Do Not Differentiate Between The Bishop And The Priest

The Plymouth and many other Protestant denominations do not differentiate between the bishop and the priest.

THE DIFERENCES BETWEEN BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

[18] The First Difference in that, The Bishop Is Empowered To Ordain The Priests

Here we see Saint Paul telling his disciple Timothy:

(1 Tim 5:22) Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

He also says to his disciple Titus:

(Titus 1:5) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you;

Church Canon stipulates that a minimum of two to three bishops are required to administer the Laying On Of Hands necessary to ordain a bishop. While one bishop is sufficient to ordain a priest.

[19] The Second Difference Is That A Bishop Is Empowered To Judge The Priests

In this Saint Paul tells his disciple Timothy:

(1 Tim 5:19) Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses.

[20] Also The Bishop Is Empowered To Reward The Priests

(1 Tim 5:17) Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

DEACONS

[21] Deacons Were First Mentioned In The Book Of Acts

Their selection, was based on the following three conditions

- (1) Men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
- (2) To be appointed by the apostles.
- (3) To be assigned specific duties.

[22] Social Service Was Their Principal Duty.

However we also hear about Saint Stephen worked in the mission and teaching.

(Acts 6:1-3) Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. {2} Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. {3} "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

(Acts 6:9-10) Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. {10} And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.

[23] The Grades Of Bishop And Deacons Attracted Special Mention In The Epistle To The Philippians

(Phil 1:1) Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

Here we observe the special mention of the bishops and the deacons, as a special group separate from the laity.

Again we ask: If all were equal and all were priests, why differentiate?

Yes, all may be saints, but not all have the same priestly office nor the same responsibilities.

[24] Here We Observe Specific Qualifications For The Deacons

(1 Tim 3:8-13) Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, {9} holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. {10} But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless. {11} Likewise their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. {12} Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. {13} For those who have

served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Most of the above qualifications, especially having one wife, are shared with the bishops. This is an indication of the importance and greatness of this rank.

(1 Tim 3:2) A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

(1 Tim 3:4) one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence

Also the apostle emphasises the greatness of this rank when he said:

(1 Tim 3:13) For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

This standing, sets them apart from the laity. This is why the stipulation of examining them before ordination.

(1 Tim 3:10) But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless.

[25] Here We See Common Qualifications Between The Bishop And The Deacon

This includes not having more than one wife, being able to rule his household and many other spiritual qualifications.

This is an obvious indication of the importance of the office of deacon and its separate standing compared with the laity.



CHAPTER 5

PRIESTHOOD IS FATHERHOOD

THE FIFTH OBJECTION

OBJECTIONS TO FATHERHOOD

In our attempt to address the issue of the priestly fatherhood, we will first respond to the objections against this biblical concept.

The objections against fatherhood revolve around the following verse:

(Mat 23:9) "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.

[1] The Lord Said Also Do Not Call Any One Teacher

We have exhausted the importance of teaching and how He granted some to be teachers.:

(Eph 4:11-12) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

And we reached the conclusion that this instruction was directed to the apostles. We also said that bishops are also to follow this rule.

Is it lawful for us to say “our teacher Saint Peter, or Saint Paul”, or do we break the commandment of Christ if we call these great apostles “teachers”?

We could deduct from the Scriptures (Old Testament & New) that spiritual fatherhood is a biblical fact, and what was uttered in Matthew 23:9 was particular to the apostles and bishops.

EVIDENCE FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

[2] Spiritual Fatherhood Existed In The Old Testament.

Abraham was called our father.

(Rom 4:11) And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also,

So Abraham is the father of all who believe, regardless if they are circumcised or not.

Some may consider him a natural father to the circumcised, but how about his fatherhood to the many gentiles?

Even his fatherhood to the circumcised is still spiritual.

(Rom 4:12) and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.

Also this spiritual sonship is founded on faith:

(Gal 3:6-7) just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." {7} Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

[3] Also Elisha Called Elijah (The Celibate) His Father

(2 Ki 2:12) And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces.

This is a spiritual fatherhood.

We could also say the same about Joash the king when he called Elisha "father":

(2 Ki 13:14) Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!"

Could any one condemn Elisha for calling Elija his father, and accepting the king calling him his father?. Was Elisha aware of God's fatherhood? Or was he unaware of it?

The Old Testament clearly called God a Father of all:

(Gen 6:2) that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

(Prov 23:26) My son, give me your heart, And let your eyes observe my ways.

(Psa 103:13) As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him.

The sons of God in Genesis were differentiated from the daughters of men. The sons of God were the descendants of Sheth

[4] Was David Wrong By Calling Saul His Father

(1 Sam 24:11) "Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it.

David called Saul “father” out of respect to the anointed of the Lord, as well as being his senior. So how much is priesthood.

[5] Was Job Wrong When He Called Himself “ Father Of The Poor”?

(Job 29:16) I was a father to the poor, And I searched out the case that I did not know.

Was Joseph mistaken to call himself father of Pharaoh?

(Gen 45:8) "So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

EVIDENCE FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT

We could also respond from the New Testament.

[6] Here We May Encounter The Rhetorical Protest Against The Validity Of Old Testament Evidence

We respond by saying: “Do not despise the Old Testament” remembering that the Lord Jesus did not destroy it nor contradicted it.

(Mat 5:17) "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

Also remember the profit gained from the Old Testament.

(2 Tim 3:16) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

[7] The Spiritual Fatherhood Is Abundantly Referred To In The New Testament

Saint Paul has repeatedly spoke about the fatherhood of our father Abraham. Hence it is not possible to contradict such holy utterance.

[8] Saint Paul Calls Titus, Timothy And Onesimus His Sons.

(1 Tim 1:2) To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

(2 Tim 1:4) greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy,

(Titus 1:4) To Titus, a true son in our common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.

(Phile 1:10) I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains,

(2 Tim 2:1) You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

It is well known that Saint Paul was a celibate, he had neither natural sons nor daughters, however he was the spiritual father to many.

Would Timothy, Titus or Onesimus dare tell Saint Paul: “you have no right to call us sons”

[9] Also Saint Paul Exhorted Saint Timothy To Consider The Older Men As Fathers To Him.

(1 Tim 5:1) Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers,

It is not imaginable that Saint Timothy would have objected by arguing that it is not scriptural to call an earthly person a father

[10] Saint Paul Claimed Fatherhood to Entire Nations

(Gal 4:9) But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

He also calls the Corinthians sons;

(1 Cor 4:14-17) I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. {15} For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. {16} Therefore I urge you, imitate me. {17} For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

[11] The Expression “I Have Begotten You Through The Gospel” Denotes Spiritual Fatherhood

Saint Paul was the father of the people of Corinth, as they embraced Christ as a result of his work.

Could any one imagine the Corinthians or the Galatians contesting Saint Paul’s fatherhood by saying
(Mat 23:9) "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. "

[12] Such Argument Would Constitutes Gross Misunderstanding Of The Scriptures

The Scriptures teach us:

(2 Cor 3:6) who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

It is dangerous to take one verse in isolation, building ones whole faith on it. One should study any verse in the light of the whole Scriptures. Also it is important to understand the context and the intent of the verse.

[13] Saint John Has Also Called Himself A Spiritual Father

(1 John 2:1) My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

(3 John 1:4) I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

[14] Also Saint Peter calls Mark his son.

(1 Pet 5:13) She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does Mark my son.

Saint Peter was much older than his nephew Mark, the son of Aristopoulos.

[15] Did These Great Apostles Erred By Claiming To Be Fathers?

Did Saints Paul, Peter and John err ? Did they think of themselves more highly than they ought to think? Did they set themselves in competition with God by calling themselves fathers?

Certainly not as Matt 29:3 was meant for the apostles and only for them.

It was they who inquired from the Lord:

(Luke 12:41) Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?"

[16] The Literal Interpretation Of Christ's Command Would Also Destroy Natural Fatherhood

There is nothing in Matt 23:9 which could limit the meaning to spiritual fatherhood. So if the verse is understood literally one could also assume that Christ has rejected natural fatherhood. Obviously not! Especially that Saint Paul reiterates God's Commandment:

(Eph 6:1-2) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. {2} "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:

[17] Matthew 23 Was Aimed At Dismantling The Authority Of The Pharisees And The Scribes

The whole chapter (Matthew 23) is designed to annihilate the old religious hierarchy. In this chapter the Lord has repeatedly and clearly admonished the Scribes and the Pharisees:

(Mat 23:13-15) "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. {14} "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. {15} "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.

(Mat 23:25) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

(Mat 23:29) "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous,

(Mat 23:33) "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"

It is clear that the Lord issued his instructions to the apostles in Matt 23:9, straight after admonishing the Scribes and Pharisees for their love of the first place and their obsession with pomp and ceremony for their person.

(Mat 23:6-7) "They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, {7} "greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.'"

[18] Hence It Was An Explicit Assault on The Fatherhood Of The Scribes And Pharisees And Not Against The Fatherhood Of The New Testament

At this stage the Lord Jesus was preparing for the cancellation of the fatherhood of the then religious hierarchy which was in complete and utter control. He was about to replace the corrupt system with a new spiritual fatherhood and leadership.

THE SIXTH OBJECTION

WE ARE ALL BRETHREN

Another anti-priesthood argument uses Matt 23:8, which emphasises brotherhood.

(Mat 23:8) "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

RESPONSES TO THIS OBJECTION

Yes! We all are brethren, as we are the descendants of Adam and Eve, Noah and Abraham. We are brethren of the same faith and baptism and we are all sons of the one, holy and apostolic Church.

Notwithstanding all the above, remains a practical and theological questions

ARE ALL BRETHREN EQUAL?

It is abundantly clear that, biblically, all brethren are not equal.

[1] Jacob And Esau

(Gen 27:29) Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!"

Elijah who shut the skies from raining and subsequently opened it, was still under the same yoke of human weakness.

[2] Brothers Are Not , By Necessity, Equal, But Some May Be Superior To Others

For example the tribe of Levi were related to the other eleven tribes, but because of the priesthood they were different.

[3] Furthermore The Superiority Of Levi Was Directly Related To The Priesthood.

So we ought not take brotherhood to mean equality. The Scriptures never propagated such equality and it never was a biblical teaching.

The Plymouth (the Brethren) denomination emphasise this teaching to the extent of leading the young to disrespect not only the elders, but also the prophets, the apostles and the saints.

Before us we could see a much bigger and deeper example.

[4] Christ The Lord Is Still Our Lord And Master Even thou He Was The Same As His Brethren In All Things, And Was Not Ashamed To Call Us Brethren

(Heb 2:12) saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."

(Heb 2:17) Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

And in great humility the Lord told Mary Magdaline

(Mat 28:10) Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me."

(John 20:17) Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say

to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

Out of humility, the Lord calls the disciples brethren, but this did not entitle them to call Him a brother in return?

Based in brotherhood, would the apostle, or any one else dare to claim equality with Christ?

In spite of Christ calling them brethren He still said:

(John 13:13-14) "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. {14} "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

Christ's brotherhood to them did not preclude Him from being a High Priest.

(Heb 2:17) Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Hence brotherhood does not institute equality.

[5] Brotherhood Does Not Preclude Difference In Roles

This is very clearly stated as follows:

(1 Cor 12:28) And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues.

Are all the above equal? Are the prophets and apostles on the same footing as their teacher or the one endowed with gifts? Certainly not!

[6] Hence As Much Are The Brethren Are Unequal In Roles And Gifts So Are The Shepherds And The Flock

Here we reiterate what is uttered by the Holy Spirit:

(Eph 4:11) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

We also add that each brother should recognise his limitations and calling.

(Rom 12:3) For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Here we note that “*God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*”

DOES BROTHERHOOD CANCELS THE HEIRARCHY?
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[7] While We Are Equal In Sonship, Salvation, The Inheritance Of The Blood Of Christ And Moral Accountability, This Should Not Lead To Anarchy.

(Judg 17:6) In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.

Could brotherhood mean the demolition of the hierarchy? Setting in of anarchy, confusion, lack of leadership and demolition of responsibility? Certainly not!

(1 Cor 14:40) Let all things be done decently and in order.

[8] The Church Is The Ideal Example Of Order As She Is The Body Of Christ.

So while the Church is Christ's Body, and all its members are the brethren, this Body still have a head and members.

Even in any family, we have the husband, the wife and the offspring. This does not stop the man of being the head of the wife, while the offspring are subject to the parents.

It is not feasible, in the name of equality, that a woman rebels against man's hegemony.

Also it is not feasible, in the name of equality, that the offspring to rebel against the parent's hegemony.

(Eph 6:1-2) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. {2} "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:

[9] The Hierarchical System Was First Appointed By God Among The Angels

*(Dan 10:13) "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and **behold, Michael, one of the chief princes**, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia.*

(Dan 12:1) "At that time Michael shall stand up, The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; And there shall be a time of trouble, Such as never was since there was a nation, Even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, Every one who is found written in the book.

(Col 1:16) For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

[10] God Also Appointed The Hierarchy Of The Priesthood

(Zec 3:1) Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.

God appointed the grading of the priesthood since the time of Aaron.

[11] God Also Permitted Moses To Appoint Lay Leaders

(Exo 18:21) "Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

(Exo 18:25-26) And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. {26} So they judged the people at all times; the hard cases they brought to Moses, but they judged every small case themselves.

(Deu 1:15) "So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and knowledgeable men, and made them heads over you, leaders of

thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes.

[12] But Where Is The Place Of Christ With Respect To This Hierarchy?

(Col 2:10) and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

The presence of such hierarchy does not stifle His hegemony or His Superiority

(Rev 19:16) And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Also the presence of shepherds, did not stifle His Shepherdship.
(Heb 13:20) Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Saint Augustine said to God: “I am their shepherd, but before You, I am one of Your flock. I am their teacher, but before You I join them in learning from You”

[13] People In Relation To God And To Each Other

People before God are brethren, but in relation to each other some are fathers , some are sons, some are teachers and others are disciples and some are priests and some are laity.

ANOTHER OBJECTION

(Mat 20:25-28) But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. {26} "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. {27} "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave; {28} "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

It is obvious that the above words are pertaining to humility, and to refrain from the authoritarian approach and from haughtiness and love of glory. These words are not a decree of abolishing the hierarchical system. The best example could be found in John 13:13 when the Lord emphasised humility, without relinquishing His authority as a Lord and Master.

(John 13:13) "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am."

The intention of the Church hierarchy and of the priesthood is order, division of responsibilities, supervision of the ministry and so forth.

It is not there to create a haven for the authoritarian behaviour nor to breed love of self or haughtiness.

The Lord Has obviously attached such behaviour which was rife at His time among the Scribes and Pharisees.

(Mat 23:5-8) "But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments. {6} "They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, {7} "greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' {8} "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.



CHAPTER 6

PRIESTHOOD AND SERVING THE ALTAR

OBJECTION AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN ALTAR

A priest is a person who serves the Christians altar. It follows then that whoever denies priesthood denies the Christian altar as well.

They say that the altar is an Old Testament thing, and that there is no New Testament altar. Hence they would not accept the liturgical prayers for the consecration of the sacrifice. And in turn they would not approve of incense, service utensils, service robes or any thing pertaining to the holy sacrifice.

Our responses will be Scriptural and we are set to prove the following

- (1) There is a New Testament Altar.
- (2) This altar did not end by the ending of the Old Testament.
- (3) The altar continues.
- (4) There is a holy sacrifice
- (5) The holy sacrifice is not just a mere symbol or a commemoration.

THE PRESENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ALTAR

[1] Saint Paul Mentions The New Testament Altar

(Heb 13:10) We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.

The tabernacle servants are the Jews... i.e. the Jews who remained as Jews, have no authority no write to partake of the Christian altar.

[2] The Book Of Isaiah Prophesied About The Christian Altar, Especially The Altar Of Egypt

(Isa 19:19-21) In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. {20} And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them. {21} Then the LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the LORD and perform it.

It is obvious that such altar to the Lord could not be a pagan altar

The emphasis of calling this altar “altar of God” was repeated at least 10 times through the chapter.

Also the prophecy concludes

(Isa 19:25) whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."

This verse is aimed at the Christian altar of Egypt, which is not any way connected to any pagan worship.

It is also obvious that such altar could not be a Jewish altar

This altar cannot be Jewish, as the Jews were not allowed to offer a sacrifice nor have an altar outside Jerusalem.

(Psa 137:1-4) By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion. {2} We hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it. {3} For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us requested mirth, Saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" {4} How shall we sing the Lord's song In a foreign land?

Also the Lord ordered the Jews out of Egypt to offer sacrifice and worship.

(Exo 8:20) And the LORD said to Moses, "Rise early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh as he comes out to the water. Then say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me."

(Exo 9:1) Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and tell him, 'Thus says the LORD God of the Hebrews: "Let My people go, that they may serve Me."

Also Pharaoh promised;

(Exo 8:29) Then Moses said, "Indeed I am going out from you, and I will entreat the LORD, that the swarms of flies may depart tomorrow from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people. But let Pharaoh not deal deceitfully anymore in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD."

So It was not feasible to have a Jewish altar in Egypt

We observe that God commanded that no sacrifice is to be offered except in the place of His selection, which would be called after His Name.

(Deu 12:11) "then there will be the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the LORD."

(Deu 12:26) "Only the holy things which you have, and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses."

(Deu 26:2) "that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the LORD your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to make His name abide."

The Lord Has Selected Jerusalem.

(2 Chr 6:6) 'Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name may be there; and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel.'

(Zec 3:2) And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?"

Hence we see that the prophecy of Isaiah is pertaining to the Christian altar of Egypt.

[3] Also Malachi Prophesied That God Will Reject The Jewish Sacrifice And Will Accept A Sacrifice From The Other Nations (the Gentiles).

(Mal 1:10-11) "Who is there even among you who would shut the doors, So that you would not kindle fire on My altar in vain? I have no pleasure in you," Says the LORD of hosts, "Nor will I accept an offering from your hands. {11} For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations," Says the LORD of hosts.

This prophecy was fulfilled during the Christian era. Before Christianity there was no other godly worship other than the Jewish.

[4] The Lord Jesus Spoke About The Christian Altar

(Mat 5:23-24) "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against

you, {24} "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

The Lord Jesus did not limit His teaching to the Old Testament but also His teaching extends to the New Testament. Otherwise His words were only applicable for 3 and a third years.

[5] If the Preceding Four points, we prove the need for an Altar for the Christian faith, then We Shall Find That We Must Have A Priest To Serve This Altar.

THE CHRISTIAN HOLY SACRIFICE

[6] The Sacrament Of Thank Giving- The Body And Blood Of Our Lord- Is A Biblical Fact

This great sacrament is detailed in the four gospels and in the first epistle to the Corinthians as in the following verses.

Matt 26:26-28

Mark 14:22-24

Luke 22:19-20

John 6:32-58

1 Cor 10:16-21

1 Cor 11: 23-30

In the following pages, God willing, we will show, in detail, and learn the following important theological facts.

[7] The Lord Himself Established This Sacrament

(Mat 26:26-28) And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." {27} Then He took the cup, and

gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. {28} "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

(1 Cor 11:23-30) For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; {24} and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." {25} In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." {26} For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. {27} Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. {28} But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. {29} For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. {30} For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

(Mark 14:22-24) And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." {23} Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. {24} And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.

(Luke 22:19-20) And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." {20} Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

[8] The Lord Commanded Us To persevere and practice This Sacrament

He commanded that this sacrament must be perpetually conducted in commemoration of Him when He said;

“Do this in remembrance of Me”.

Hence, we would be breaking His commandment, if we do not continue to practice this Sacrament.

(1 Cor 11:25) In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

(Luke 22:19) And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

[9] “Do This” Is A Special Command

It is obvious that the Lord has placed a special emphasis on conducting this Sacrament through His Words. This necessitates a special grade of people (the priests) to carry out this command.

So the Holy Spirit through the invocation of the priest should carry out the transubstantiation.

[10] How Long Should We Continue Offering This Sacrament?

We should continue until Christ comes back on the Day of the General Resurrection. This is to say for all the days of our lives.

This is a Scriptural teaching, which is not limited to one period of history, nor was it meant only for the apostolic age.

[11] The Lord Handed Down This Sacrament To His Disciples

He did not say to the general congregation to *‘Do This In Remembrance Of Him’*”.

He reserved this sacrament to the apostles, while the rest of the congregation participated in eating from it.

To preserve this sacrament, it was necessary for it to be handed down by their successors, and continue until the day of the Second Coming of our Lord.

[12] Saint Paul also explains the same point.

Saint Paul was not present on Maundy Thursday. But Lord in recognition of the importance of this Sacrament, decided to personally hand over such an important tradition, to Saint Paul.

(1 Cor 11:23) For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;

Saint Paul also indicated that those who offered this sacrifice were the Apostles and their successors, and not the anyone in general.

(1 Cor 10:16) The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

But when he spoke to the congregation, he used “you” and not “we”.

(1 Cor 10:21) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

This tells us the apostles performed this sacrament and the congregation took part of it.

Here another question presenting itself:

What is the significance of this Sacrament? Is it a mere morsel of bread and some wine, for partaking by the faithful, as propagated by the Protestants? Or is it the true Body and Blood as extolled by the Scriptures?

[13] This Sacrament Is A Not Mere Bread

The Lord exalted this Sacrament through the following verses (John 6: 32-58). I strongly commend the reader to read and observe the following statements:

*(John 6:32-33) Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the **true bread from heaven.** {33} "**For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**"*

*(John 6:35) And Jesus said to them, "**I am the bread of life.** He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.*

(John 6:41) *The Jews then complained about Him, because He said, **"I am the bread which came down from heaven."***

(John 6:48) **"I am the bread of life.**

(John 6:50-51) **"This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. {51} "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."**

At this point, we would like to ask our brethren the Protestants:

1. Is the bread they offer bear the above biblical descriptions?
2. Is it the Bread of life?
3. Is it the bread, which gives life to the world?
4. Is it the Lord Himself as He said?

[14] This Bread Is The Body Of The Lord

This is not our contrived teaching, but it is the Lord's own words.

(John 6:51) *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."*

Can we ignore the Lord's bold and strong words, in order to follow human logic?

We should refer to the Lord's answer to the Jews, who bluntly asked Him, "How can He give us His body to eat"?

(John 6:53) Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

So people who perform this commandment in "commemoration", are they partaking from what they offer as the Body and blood of the Lord, or do they consider them a mere piece of bread and some wine?

And if the latter is the answer, where do they stand on the following statement uttered by Christ:

(John 6:54) "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

It is perfectly clear that these promises are applicable to the ones who eat and drink believing without doubt that they are partaking of the Body and the Blood of the Lord.

Those who believe will receive the divine promises as uttered by the Lord in John Chapter 6.

It is also clear that the promises are granted to those who partake of the real thing, and not just a symbol:

(John 6:55) "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.

His Body and Blood were what He meant when he spoke about the Bread coming down from heaven. He said:

(John 6:58) "This is the bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."

We proclaim in the Liturgy that this is the TRUE BODY and TRUE BLOOD of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This proclamation is not based on a contrived, preconceived idea of ours. It is also NOT a theological novelty. We have taken what the Lord said as gospel truth in simplicity, as spiritual people and not as argumentative theorists.

We accept it as is because the Lord uttered it. We dare not add to His utterance, nor can we mix it with our earthly wisdom in contradiction with the Word.

We urge those who claims to be “Evangelical” to follow the gospel truth.

So what does the Gospel say according to Christ?

[15] This Is My Body - This Is My Blood

Our Blessed Lord Said this:

(Mat 26:26) And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

(Mat 26:27-28) Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. {28} "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

(Mark 14:22) And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

(Mark 14:23) Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

(Luke 22:19) And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

(Luke 22:20) Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."

“My Body” in the context of communion was mentioned five times in John Chapter 6. “My Blood” in the context of communion was mentioned 4 times in John Chapter 6. Please refer to John 6 verses 51,53,54,55,56.

Regardless of any contrived logical theory, can one deny all the explicit divine Scriptures?

The literal interpretation of this divine text is supported by three important facts:

[16] The Benefits And Blessings Of Communion.

The benefits and blessings of communion are spiritually superior, which can not be received from ordinary bread. Communion grants **Eternal Life, steadfastness in the Lord and Forgiveness of Sins**

Eternal Life

(John 6:54) "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Steadfastness In the Lord

(John 6:57) "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.

Forgiveness of Sins

(Mat 26:28) "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

(Luke 22:19-20) And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." {20} Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

Is it possible that such precious blessings emanates from partaking of mere bread and wine offered for the purpose of remembrance? Definitely not...

Could normal bread give life and forgive sin? Who would accept that?

Theologically, the sacrificed Body and the Blood, which was shed for us, is the only thing that can grant such blessings. Who have ears let him hear.

It is also necessary to recognize the contrariety.

[17] Reserved Punishment For Unworthy Partakers.

Such punishment is explained by Saint Paul:

(1 Cor 11:27) Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

The Apostle continues on to say:

(1 Cor 11:28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Would eating normal bread necessitate all this preparedness and self examination?

Here we also note that the apostle have explicitly declared that this is the true Body and true Blood of our Lord.

The apostle emphasised the importance of “examination of oneself” and his worthiness.

Worthiness is marked by repentance, having no partnership with demonic practices.

(1 Cor 10:21) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.

Some punishments include sickness and death.

(1 Cor 11:30-31) For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. {31} For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

Could partaking of normal bread lead to sickness and death?

Would the unworthy partaking of normal memorial bread lead to judgment and condemnation?

(1 Cor 11:29) For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

We note that in verses 27 and 28 of 1 Cor 11, the apostle repeated the word “the Lord’s Body” three times.

[18] Losses Incurred By People Who Do Not Partake

In this the Lord said:

(John 6:53) Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

We are deprived from life when we do not partake of the Bread of Life and the honourable Blood of Christ.

(Mat 26:28) "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

[19] Shedding Of Blood Constitutes A Sacrifice

The Lord while offering this Sacrament uttered the following:

(Mat 26:28) "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

(Mark 14:24) And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.

(Luke 22:20) Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

(1 Cor 11:24) and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

So if there is to be the breaking of the Body and shedding of Blood, there must be an altar. An Altar requires an altar servant, that is, a priest to offer the sacrifice.

This takes us to an interesting and vital point on the shedding of blood and forgiveness of sin.

[20] Shedding Of Blood As The Only Means To Forgive Sin

(Mat 26:27-28) Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. {28} "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

If this Blood is for forgiveness of sin, then it can not be a mere remembrance.

It can not be just wine, as normal wine does not have the power of forgiveness of sin.

(Heb 9:22) And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

“Remission of sins” immediately brings to mind the Blood of Christ.

This is why the priest, during the liturgy, repeats the utterance of Christ:

“Given for the Forgiveness of Sins and Eternal Life to whoever partakes of it”.

[21] This Is The Connection Between This Sacrament And The Eternal Life

(Rom 6:23) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So through the forgiveness obtained from Sacrament, we are pardoned from the death imputed on us as a result of the sin, which was made possible through His Blood shed on the holy cross.

This is why the Lord said:

(John 6:54) "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

(John 6:51) "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

(John 6:33) "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

(John 6:57) "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.

And if Communion grants life, it follows that whoever abandons it is devoid of Life.

(John 6:53) Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

[22] This Sacrament Is Also A Reminder Of The Priesthood Of Melchizedek

Saint Paul has explicitly described Christ's priesthood as of Melchizedek's.

(Heb 7:11) Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

(Heb 7:15) And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest

He also emphasises the fact that the Melchizedek's priesthood is confirmed by an oath, while the one of Aaron is not.

(Heb 7:21) for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek

So here it is obvious that the priesthood of the Old Testament was for a limited duration, but the one of the New Testament is eternal.

The reference of Saint Paul's teaching is derived from Psalm 110.

(Psa 110:4) The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

So, what is this priesthood of Melchizedek?

Melchizedek did not offer a blood sacrifice, but he offered the divine offering of bread and wine, as carried out by Christ on Maundy Thursday. Here is one of the similarities between the priesthood of Christ and Melchizedek's

Also the priesthood of Christ, as with that of Melchizedek's, is neither tribal nor inheritable.

(Heb 7:3) without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

Also the Sacrifice of wine and bread synonymies with the blessing endowed on Jacob

The Patriarch Isaac said of his son Jacob:

(Gen 27:37) Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?"

Also Isaac uttered the following blessing for Jacob to his son:

*(Gen 27:28) Therefore may God give you Of the dew of heaven, Of the fatness of the earth, **And plenty of grain and wine.***

For it was necessary that Christ would come from the descendants of Jacob who would bless the nations by using grain and wine saying:

(Mat 26:26-27) ... "Take, eat; this is My body." And this is my Blood "Drink from it, all of you. "

Melchizedek was counted as a priest though he did not offer a blood sacrifice, but offered bread and wine. So it was Christ who came as a priest on the order of Melchizedek.

Hence there is priesthood which offers a blood sacrifice, and there is another type of priesthood which offers bread and wine sacrifice.

Through the priesthood, the sacrament of bread and wine remains.

The expression “ Priests on the order of Melchizedek” is a perpetual priesthood, which will continue as long as we are in need for forgiveness of sin.

We are going to address a number of objections to this sacrament, before returning back to our main subject matter.

OBJECTIONS TO THIS SACRIFICE

[23] Some Object by saying, “How can Something Commemorate Itself”?

The Lord Jesus said “Do this in remembrance of Me”, How can the memory of the sacrifice, be the sacrifice itself?

There is nothing stopping from having something being its own memory. For example, the Manna was remembered by keeping some of it in a special utensil inside the Ark of Covenant.

(Exo 16:33-35) And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations." {34} As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. {35} And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.

So the Manna in the pot was a remembrance of what they ate for forty years.

[24] How can something physical Be A Spiritual Food?

The expression “Spiritual Food” is a biblical term used for the Manna, which was a symbol for the Sacrament of Communion.

Saint Paul said about the Israelites in Sinai:

(1 Cor 10:3-4) all ate the same spiritual food, {4} and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

So the Rock which was a type to Christ:

(Psa 78:20) Behold, He struck the rock, So that the waters gushed out, And the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?"

Bread is a material, but it is transubstantiated to the Body of Christ for our benefit, so is the wine which is transubstantiated to the Blood of Christ.

[25] Some Object That Christ's Sacrifice can not Be Repeated

Yes we agree that the Sacrifice of Christ is one, but it is a perpetual sacrifice.

Christ wanted it to perpetuate, otherwise why did He say "Do this... until I return".

By handing the Sacrament to Saint Paul years after His resurrection, He showed His desire for its perpetuity.

Also note:

(Psa 110:4) The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

(Heb 7:21) (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn And will not relent, 'You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek'"),

The expression "*You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek*"), meant its perpetuity.

We wish to reiterate the great benefits of partaking of this Sacrament, and the loss incurred by not partaking of it.

[26] Why Focus On The “Remembrance” Aspect And Deliberately Ignore The Other Verses Concerning The Sacrament

So why ignore the verses containing the following:

- ⇒ This is My Body.....My Blood
- ⇒ My Body, Which is broken for you.
- ⇒ To be given....for the forgiveness of sins.
- ⇒ The Living Bread from heaven.
- ⇒ Whoever Eats.....and drinks.....
- ⇒ Abide in Me and I in him.
- ⇒ Eat and drink judgment.
- ⇒ Not discerning the Body of the Lord.
- ⇒ Will be guilty of The Body and Blood.

Is it fair or proper to ignore all these references in favour of “The Remembrance”?

Yes indeed we remember Him when we partake of His Body and His Blood.

We remember and preach his atonement and His sacrificial death on the cross, until His Second Coming.

We remember His limitless Love.

But all this memory does not warrant forgetting that; “ This Is My Body....This Is My Blood”.

Also the expression “Each time you eat” and “Each time you drink” denotes perpetuity of the original offering made on Maundy Thursday.

[27] The Transubstantiation

The Transubstantiation was clearly proclaimed by Christ Himself:

(This Is My Body.....This Is My Blood)

He did not say “This is symbolic of My Body & this is symbolic of My Blood”.

Saint Paul did not speak “discerning the Lords Symbolic Body” but rather, He said:

(1 Cor 11:29) For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Hence if one says that he is only partaking of a symbol, such person is not discerning of the Lord’s body.

Those who are sincere about the biblical truth should carefully consider the above verses, which were uttered by Christ and Saint Paul His disciple.

The biblical truth means the bible as a whole.

(2 Tim 3:16) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

It is not proper to formulate and limit one's teaching upon single verses.



CHAPTER 7

PRIESTHOOD AND THE AUTHORITY TO ABSOLVE AND RETAIN

The Scriptures says:

(Mat 10:1) And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

We note that Saint Peter and Saint Paul used this power to discipline

(Acts 5:10-11) Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. {11} So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

(Acts 13:10-11) and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? {11} "And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

While these powers were miraculous, we would like to dwell on their power of sin and forgiveness. Especially we could see that the disciples had power to discipline sinners.

[1] The Priesthood Is Empowered To Confront Sinners And Discipline Them

The authority to absolve and suspend will be explained in a later chapter. And that such authority was handed over from the disciples to their successors.

[2] The Authority To Absolve Is Directly Linked To Confession. Without Confession, How Would The Priest Be In A Position To Absolve?

THE FOUR TYPES OF CONFESSION

[3] It Is Biblically Incorrect To Claim That Confession Is To God Alone And No One Else. As The Scriptures Teach Us, there are Four Types Of Confession.

[3A] Confession of the Sinner to God:

This is indisputable, as there are numerous Scriptural references. Here we quote two examples.

(Psa 51:4) Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight; That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.

(Dan 9:4-5) And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, {5} "we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments.

[3B] Confession Of The Sinner To The Clergy:

Both the Old and New Testaments support this principal, which we are about to expound in this chapter

[3C] Confession of the Sinner to His Victim:

The Lord has commanded that sinners shall make good with their victims

(Mat 5:23-24) "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, {24} "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

(Luke 17:3-4) "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. {4} "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

[3D] Confession of the Sinner to Himself through repentance:

This is, most definitely, the first and foremost form of confession. How would one confess to God, the priest or his victim, without first admitting his guilt before Himself.

The most prevalent example is the "Prodigal Son"

(Luke 15:17-18) "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! {18} 'I will arise and go to my

father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

In conclusion restricting confession to God is not Scriptural, especially when we read:

(James 5:16) Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

CONFESSION TO A PRIEST AS A SCRITURAL PRINCIPAL

The Old Testament Evidence

[4] Confession To Priests Was An Established Fact From The Time Of The Written Commandment An The Offering Of The Sacrifice

(Lev 5:5-6) 'And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing; {6} 'and he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD for his sin which he has committed, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats as a sin offering. So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin.

Here we see that the sinner would go to the priest and confess. The priest in turn instructs the repentant of the proper sacrifice fitting to the circumstances. The sinner would then bring the sacrifice, place his hand on it, so that the sin may be transferred to the sacrifice, before it is offered to God.

(Num 5:6-7) "Speak to the children of Israel: 'When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit in unfaithfulness against the LORD, and that person is guilty, {7} 'then he shall confess the sin which he has committed. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full, plus one-fifth of it, and give it to the one he has wronged.

[5] David Confesses To Nathan

(2 Sam 12:13) So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

As we see king David confessed his sin, and Nathan absolves him.

So confession to a priest was a perpetual practice and was strictly adhered to for every sin requiring a sacrifice.

[6] The Period Between The Old Testament And The New.

Saint John the Baptist (the son of Zacharias) received the confessions of the people's before baptising them.

(Mat 3:6) and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

Hence confession is not a restricted practice to a certain era, but it is a natural extension of the Old Testament.

New Testament Evidence

[7] The Practice Of Confessing To The Priest Continued To The New Testament.

We see that the Lord Jesus granting the authority to forgive, firstly to Saint Peter then to all the disciples and apostles.

(Mat 16:19) "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

(Mat 18:18) "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

[8] Some Incorrect Interpretations To This Clear Priestly Authority

In an attempt to dilute this clear authority, some Evangelical commentators devise a bazaar theory, claiming that such authority was granted to enable the disciples to allow people to partake of prohibited foodstuff such as pork

Such teachings are not at all scriptural but rather, self-interpretation of people, who at any cost, would like to deny the obvious.

(Mat 16:17-18) Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. {18} "And I also

say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

Is it logical to think that Saint Peter's reward for confessing the divinity of Christ, was an authority to allow people to eat pork!?

And who said that the "Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven" were in eating pigs?

Even Saint Peter never understood this to be so, nor did the apostles.

In the record of the baptismal of Cornelios, we see that Saint Peter argued against eating the defiled food that was offered to him in the vision, instructing the Church to accept the Gentiles.

(Acts 10:14) But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

By saying " *I have never eaten any thing common...*" It is obvious that Saint Peter was never under such incorrect misapprehension about the authority to absolve.

The permission to eat, was thrice granted by God:

(Acts 10:15) And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

It is obvious that Saint Peter understood clearly that this was an instruction from God to accept the Gentiles.

It was enough to record in writing the permission to eat.

(Col 2:16) So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,

It would be futile to assume that the “Keys to the Kingdom” lies in granting the apostles the power and sending them to traverse the globe, for the single purpose of granting people permission to eat pork

[9] The Lord Coined The Definition For The Power To Absolve

(John 20:22,23) " Receive the Holy Spirit . "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Here we see a clear definition of authority, without reference to pigs.

Our fathers the apostles understood the correct meaning and exercised their authority. It is obvious that the Lord’s utterance in John 20:23 complements Matthew 16:19 and Matthew 18:18.

[10] It Is Also Scriptural That The Disciples Exercised Their Authority Accepting Peoples’ Confessions

(Acts 19:18) And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

How dare the pillars of the Church, the apostles, accept peoples’ confessions if such was a divine right limited to God?

[11] If Receiving Confession Is An Exclusive Divine Right, So How Did Saint James Say:

(James 5:16) Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

To “*Confess your trespasses to one another*” means humans to humans, which also supports that confession is not exclusive to God. Saint Augustine also said that the humans who receive confessions i.e the priests, must be empowered to do so,. He used the analogy of **“teaching one another”**. It goes without saying that the learned teach the unlearned, as it is not possible for the ignorant to teach an ignorant.

While, it may be possible for a person to confess to another, the appropriate thing is to confess to the priest, who has the position of fatherhood, power to forgive and a canonical obligation not to divulge confessions to any one.

[13] Confession of people, is in no way robbery to the God's divine rights.

One confesses to God in the presence of a priest ear, or in another way, we say that the sinner condemns himself, before God, in the presence of the priest.

So the priest is not independent from God, but authorised as God’s vicar to carry out this important task.

(Titus 1:7) For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

I like a quote in this context the statement by Joshua to Achan:

(Josh 7:19) Now Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I beg you, give glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession to Him, and tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me."

[14] When You Confess To A Lay Person He May Reconcile You To himself Or he may give you guidance. But He can never Grant You Absolution

Absolution is for the priest only.

(Mat 18:18) "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

(John 20:23) "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

So the confessor, leaves the priest confident of being absolved of his sins.

Such confidence and surety emanates from the divine promise and from the power granted to His priests.

OBJECTION

[15] Some May Object And Say "How Dare The Priest Grant Absolution In The Presence Of God, While Forgiveness Is A Divine Right"

We could respond by quoting 2 examples from the Scriptures.

[16] The Priest Is Not Self Appointed, But He Is Empowered By God

(Mat 18:18) "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

(John 20:23) "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

[17] The Example Of Nathan Absolving David

(2 Sam 12:13) ...And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.

[18] Here I Remind You With Another Fitting Biblical Example

(Isa 6:1-4) In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. {2} Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. {3} And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" {4} And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

Here we can clearly observe the Lord on His Throne, The Seraphim around Him and the posts of the doors were shaken.

And here Isaiah is shaken to the core in awe and trembling saying and crying:

(Isa 6:5) So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

The Seraphim could not bear his utterance “*I am undone!*”, so what was the action and the result?

(Isa 6:6-7) Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. {7} And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."

Here - In the presence of God - Isaiah was granted absolution by one of the Seraphim. The absolution was granted by the mouth of the Seraphim and not God's.

This was a symbol of the Church angel (the priest) who has the authority to say “your sins are purged”.

Are we in a position to question actions of the Seraphim? Is it possible to say to the Seraphim “It was not proper for you to absolve Isaiah in the presence of God?”

David the Psalmist says:

(Psa 103:20) Bless the LORD, you His angels, Who excel in strength, who do His word, Heeding the voice of His word.

EXAMPLES OF THE POWER TO ABSOLVE AND RETAIN

Here we will quote numerous examples where power was only given to the apostles and their successors.

[19] Saint Paul's Power To Excommunicate The Sinner Of Corinth

(1 Cor 5:3-5) For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. {4} In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, {5} deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Here we clearly see the power of Saint Paul; who also said:

(1 Cor 5:13) But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."

We note that Saint Paul in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians re-admitted this man, after his repentance, to the Church.

(2 Cor 2:6-8) This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, {7} so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. {8} Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

And the congregation adhered to Saint Paul's edicts, in both cases of excommunication and forgiveness.

He was the one to excommunicate and to absolve, and the laity, without argument, carried out and obeyed with no discussion.

[20] Saint Paul Spoke About His Ecclesiastical Priestly Power

(2 Cor 10:8) For even if I should boast somewhat more about our authority, which the Lord gave us for edification and not for your destruction, I shall not be ashamed;

(2 Cor 13:10) Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.

[21] Saint Paul Heralds His Authority

(Gal 1:8) But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

(Gal 1:9) As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Saint Paul dared, as uttered by Saint Basil the Great, to excommunicate angels.

[22] Saint Paul Uses his Power to Warn and Punish

(2 Cor 13:2) I have told you before, and foretell as if I were present the second time, and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare;

(2 Cor 10:6) and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

Here we see the power, to order, judge, excommunicate and forgive. This is God conferring this power to the disciples and their successors

[23] Also Another Example Is His Instructions To The Thessalonians

(2 Th 3:14) And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

(2 Th 3:6) But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us.

Here we see his authority and power and the obedience of the people.

Here we reiterate our reply to the most common objection by our Protestant brethren.

HOW CAN A PRIEST FORGIVES SIN

Our Protestant brethren imagine that the priest forgives sins through his own power, and that he has no divine authority for him to do so.

They assume that the priest robs God of His rights and performs a divine act, while only being human.

We will explain this point theologically from the Scriptures to find out what is the priest's role in the whole situation.

[24] They Claim That Forgiveness Is Only God's

Such assertion by our Protestant brethren is based on the following Scriptures.

(Mark 2:7) "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

(Psa 85:3) You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger.

The also say that Christ on the cross, addressed the Father asking for forgiveness to those who crucified Him.

(Luke 23:34) Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

OUR RESPONCE

[25] It is not we who Sought After This Right, but It Was Granted By Christ

It was Christ who said:

(Mat 18:18) "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

(John 20:23) "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

[26] There Are Three Types Of Forgiveness Each With Its Special Emphasis

These three types are:

- God's Forgiveness
- People's Forgiveness For Each Other
- Priestly Forgiveness

[26A] God's forgiveness is the basis of all forgiveness

He is the Just Judge and He is:

(Gen 18:25) "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

[26B] People Forgiving Each Other

This means forgiving each other through reconciliation. Such is a commandment of God Himself.

(Mat 5:24) "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

(Mat 18:21-22) Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" {22} Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

(Luke 17:3-4) "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. {4} "And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

The Lord has singled out and commented upon the forgiveness aspect in "The Lords Prayer":

(Mat 6:14-15) "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. {15} "But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

(Mark 11:25-26) "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. {26} "But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

Then one is commanded to forgive his brother. And the question remains, how could one forgive if forgiveness is restricted to God alone. We answer and say : “God’s forgiveness” is unique to “Man’s Forgiveness”.

When a person forgives his brother, he may forgo his rights, but this does not guarantee him eternal life by God unless one’s repentance is genuine.

The precious blood grants forgiveness to the offender offers who offers genuine repentance, and the victim who willingly acceded to forgive.

Forgiving others is a condition for receiving God’s forgiveness for our sins.

(Luke 6:37) "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

Also Saint Paul spoke about such forgiveness.

(Col 3:13) bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

[27] As For The Priests’ Forgiveness It Is Of Another Type Which Is Directly Linked To God’s Own Forgiveness

The link between God’s forgiveness and the priest’s is found in the following verse:

(Mat 16:19) "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Is the priest empowered to have such authority? And how does such forgiveness take place?

[28] And without shedding of blood there is no remission. (Heb 9:22)

So no can gain forgiveness away from the Blood of Christ, even after receiving the absolution or the pardon of the victim.

[29] It Is The Utmost Duty Of The Priest To Ensure That The Sinner Is Worthy Of Receiving The Blood Of Christ By Ensuring The Sincerity Of His Repentance

Repentance is the basis for the declaration of forgiveness.

(Luke 13:3,5) "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

The priest may grant absolution, if and only if, the sinner proclaims his repentance and his desire not to return to his sin.

The priest announces the forgiveness because:

(Mal 2:7) "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts."

[30] The Declaration Of Forgiveness By The Priest Is A Process Of Transferring The Sin To The Account Of Christ To Blot It out With His Blood

This is why Nathan has correctly announced after David's repentance:

(2 Sam 12:13) ... "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die."

[31] The Priest Is therefore, The Announcer And Not The Source Of Forgiveness.

He declares the Lord's gift of forgiveness to the sinner. This gift is directly attributed to the atonement and sacrifice of Christ.

The priest is an agent or a vicar of God.

This is why the priest says "May God Absolve You" and not "I have absolved you".

[32] What Proves That God Is The Source Is The Prayer Of Absolution Itself

The absolution is given to the sinner through a prayer, which is raised on his, behalf by the priest who says: "Lord forgive his sins, bless him, absolve him..."

[33] One of The Most Wonderful Expressions In The Absolution Is The One which associates the Holy Spirit with Forgiveness

Before the confession rite of the liturgy, the priest says " May they be absolved from my mouth, through the Holy Spirit"

The Holy Spirit given to the priest during his ordination, is the one which forgives.

During the ordination of a priest, the bishop says; “Receive the Holy Spirit”, the priest opens his mouth and receives the breath of the bishop saying “ I opened my mouth and caught myself a Spirit” Psalm 119.

This is modelled on Christ breathing on his disciples.

(John 20:22-23) And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. {23} "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

CONCLUSION

[34] The Holy Spirit Is The Source Of The Power Of Forgiveness. He Forgives the Sins of the People Through The Mouth Of The Priest

The Lord Jesus said about the Holy Spirit:

(John 16:14) "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.

Verse	Meaning
(1) Take of What Is Mine	(1A) My Hypostatic Attributes of knowledge (1B) The gift of forgiveness through My Blood

(2) And Declare It To You

Declare to you the forgiveness
of your sins.

Question: But how can He tell us?

Answer: Through the mouth of the priest.

The subject matter has, being clarified, can be summarised as follows:

- (a) God is the Forgiver of sins through His Holy Spirit.
- (b) The Holy Spirit takes from the gifts of Christ's Blood to give us.
- (c) The Holy Spirit grants forgiveness through the mouth of the priest.
- (d) This declaration is valid to the true repentant, who become worthy of the Blood of Christ.
- (e) The priest verifies the sinner's repentance.
- (f) When the priest prays to God to forgive, he says: "May the Lord Absolve you, with His Holy Spirit through my mouth"

[35] The Majority of those who Object To Confession, Are Not Basing Their Objection On Scripture, But Object out of Self Shame.

It may be that God has arranged this shame for their benefit to help them refrain from returning to the sin.

He who desires to confess directly to God, is the same person who having no shame also committed the sin directly in front of God. This is in contrast to Joseph who said:

(Gen 39:9) ...How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

One's shame before the priest ought to shrink to naught when compared with shame suffered by the sinner before God.

[36] We Do Not withhold The Sinner From Confessing To God, Which Is A Must, But In Addition We Want Him To Confess To The Priest.

Confessing to the priest will not only call to someone's attention to his shame, but also it will help him gain guidance from the priest.

The priest will permit him, after verifying of his repentance, to partake of the holy sacrament of Communion.

[37] Confessing To God Direct May Lead To Ignoring Certain Matters Which In The Eyes Of The Confessor May Not Seem Sinful

(Prov 14:12) There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

How could one confess something, which may be fatal, if in the first place he does not realise it is a sin?

[38] The Apostles Received Peoples' Confession and Conducted The Service Of Reconciliation

(2 Cor 5:18-20) Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, {19} that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. {20} Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God

were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

It is important to note that reconciling people to God is not confined to preaching and education only. It must include a deep understanding of the soul, its wars and failures and specific guidance for each soul on how to be reconciled with God.

It is noted that many confess their sins directly to God, but they are still unable to forsake their sins and offer true repentance since they are without guidance. This is why this sacrament is called the sacrament of repentance.

[39] While Christ Sacrificed His Blood For All, Not everyone will be Worthy To Receive This Universal Salvation. For some have not Accepted Faith, Baptism and Repentance.

The priest is the faithful custodian of these sacramental treasures acquired through the Blood of Christ. He is empowered to grant them first through faith and baptism, then afterwards through repentance.

(Mark 16:16) "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

(Luke 13:3) "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

To repent, one must confess.

(Prov 28:13) He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.

[40] It Is Not Logical For a Priest To absolve Sins without knowing of them first.

The priest should know what he is about to transfer to Christ's account.

He cannot forgive sins in absentia. Nor can he could grant absolution without ensuring faithful repentance. How else would he ensure this, without firstly knowing the sin he is about to forgive.

If God granted this right to the priest, why are some jealous for God, as if the priests have seized God's own rights.

A Pertinent Question

Following on from the above biblically proven discussion about the power of absolution and forgiveness by using the examples and practices of the apostles, we would like to ask an important and a pertinent question.

What is the misdeed of the clergy, who have never sought after such honour, but it was granted to them as a free gift and as an obligation from the Lord?

(Mat 18:18) "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

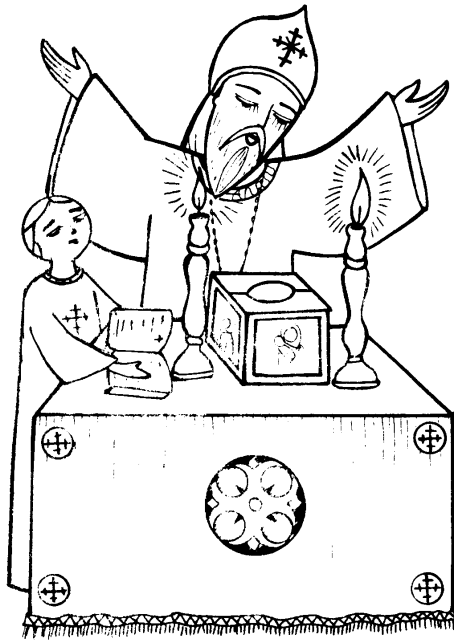
(John 20:23) "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

What is their sin if they shoulder this eminent power and awesome responsibility?

Here we see a man being given the responsibility to forgive or punish, through his knowledge of God's commandments. What then is his sin or fault if he exercises his right and fulfilled his obligation?

Was it, or is it, practical or proper for these people after being told by Christ to loose or bind; To object and say: " Lord, please change your command, as it is shameful for us to exercise this authority?

Any way our next chapter will deal with the question "Is God Jealous of His Children"?



CHAPTER 8

IS GOD JEALOUS OF HIS CHILDREN?

1. Mistaken and unwarranted Jealousy
2. Christ Adorns His Children
3. God Glorifies His Creation.
4. God Exalts His Creation.
5. What Is Meant By *“I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another”*

MISTAKEN & UNWARRANTED JEALOUSY

[1] People Who Deny Priesthood Are Mistaken In Their Unwarranted Jealousy For God

They imagine that we rob God of His glory, and give it to the priesthood.

They base their protest on the verse:

(Isa 42:8) I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.

As if we have given the priesthood additional attributes, powers and responsibilities which are not his. Or as if we are paying them homage and respect which are God’s alone, and are not for humans.

In this chapter we will endeavour to search the Biblical basis of such jealousy. We will investigate this ill-informed jealousy, in the light of the Scriptures.

(Rom 10:2) For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

[2] God ordered Mosses to elect 70 prominent learned elders to bear the burden the peoples with him

(Num 11:16-17) So the LORD said to Moses: "Gather to Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them; bring them to the tabernacle of meeting, that they may stand there with you. {17} "Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone.

And it happened that **while the Spirit was taken from Moses to dwell on the elect,** two men who were still tarrying in the tent, started to prophecy. This news came to Moses and Joshua, who (Joshua) rebuked them to restrain them.

And here we see Moses the great prophet rebuked Joshua.

(Num 11:25-29) Then the LORD came down in the cloud, and spoke to him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and placed the same upon the seventy elders; and it happened, when the Spirit rested upon them, that they prophesied, although they never did so again. {26} But two men had remained in the camp: the name of one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them. Now they were among those listed, but who had not gone out to the tabernacle; yet they prophesied in the camp. {27} And a young man ran and told Moses, and said, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." {28} So Joshua the son of Nun,

Moses' assistant, one of his choice men, answered and said, "Moses my lord, forbid them!" {29} Then Moses said to him, "Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"

Here we see Moses above jealousy, so what would we say about God and His unlimited greatness? Would it be conceivable to imagine God being jealous of His children. Is it appropriate for us to be jealous for God, as if His Glory has been endangered by the rank of priesthood?

God is above Jealousy, as jealousy is for little people.

[3] I would like To Dwell On The Way God Honours His Beloved Children

I stand transfixed at God's utterance:

(Num 11:17) "I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them;"

Here we observe God the giver and origin of all gifts, takes from the Spirit of Moses and pour it on the elders!

Are not God's gifts unlimited? Was not Him, who granted Moses this Spirit from the beginning? Was He not able to pour upon the elders His gifts as He did before with Moses? The obvious answer is to the affirmative, but in this occasion God wanted to honour Moses before the people?

Here God asked Moses to elect the elders, and granted them the Spirit of Moses'. In this manner God made these elders subject to Moses and not his equal. And by God's helping Hand, Moses was exceedingly glorified before the people.

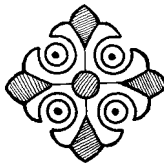
[4] It Is Abundantly Clear That God Is Never Jealous Of His Children

God is not jealous of His children, but to the contrary. He exalts, honours and glorifies them. This point will be expounded in detail, to ensure that such wrong zealots are better informed of God's gift of glory to His children.

[5] These Zealots Ask, "How Can Humans Take On God's Own Work And Names?"

- How can someone be a priest; while Christ is the only Priest?
- How can any one be called master and teacher; while the only Master and Teacher is Christ
- How can they be shepherds; while Christ Is the only Good Shepherd? (John 10)
- How can they forgive sins; while God is the only one who forgives sins?
- How can they mediate between man and God; while the Only Mediator is Christ? (1 Timothy 2:5)

Most of the above questions were addressed in the previous chapters; But we will address the remaining points in the concluding chapter. But for now, we will address some general matters.



[6] They Protest Saying How Can We Give Christ's Own Designations To Humans.

Some books claims that such is blasphemy, and others call it satanic heresy. It is with regret to encounter such gentle!!! Expressions.

But I wish to declare that the Scriptures have granted Christ's designations to people.

Also Christ Himself granted some of His designations to some people. Some of Christ's designations were also granted to all, i.e. the faithful laity.

And some of His designations He granted to His vicars the disciples.

EXAMPLES

[7] Christ's Designation As The Shepherds

The Lord said

(John 10:11) "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

(John 10:14) "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

(John 10:16) "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Does mean that whoever calls himself a shepherd, is trespassing Christ's own title claiming them to himself?

Many Protestant ministers, without jealousy or remorse, call themselves shepherds or pastors, they conveniently forget the verses they use to contradict the Orthodox priesthood:

(Rom 12:3) For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

(John 10:16) "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

(2 Cor 3:6) who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The Lord Jesus Our Shepherd

(John 10:16) "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

The New Testament Shepherds

(John 21:15-17) So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." {16} He said to him again a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know

that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." {17} He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep.

(1 Pet 2:25) For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

(1 Pet 5:4) and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

[8] As We See From The Above The Lord appointed shepherds, and these "Shepherds" were also Called Bishops

The Lord Christ is our true Shepherd. But He can also confer this title on others of His flock.

Christ is the "Shepherd of shepherds". The priest shepherds the flock, but before Christ, he is one of the sheep

This is why saint Peter calls Christ the Chief Shepherd.

(1 Pet 5:3-4) nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; {4} and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

[9] God Is The Shepherd From Old

*(Psa 23:1) The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
(Ezek 34:15-16) "I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down," says the Lord GOD. {16} "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick; but I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment."*

But He still confers on others to be shepherds for Him.

(Eph 4:11) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

So why be jealous for Him and for His designations?

[10] Christ Is Our Teacher

Here we will also dwell on Christ's designation of "Teacher", as used in the above quotation from the epistle to the Ephesians.

He was called, "The Good Teacher".

(Mat 19:16) Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

He Himself agreed with this designation.

(John 13:13-14) "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. {14} "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

But, while we see Christ say:

(Mat 23:10) "And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.

He still appointed teachers:

(Eph 4:11) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

[11] We Reiterate And Say It Is The Same Designation But Used Differently

Please refer back to the numerous verses previously used to prove that the disciples and their successors are the teachers.

He is our true Teacher, and from Him emanates all knowledge. While the priest relays God's teachings to the flock:

(Mal 2:7) "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

So do not fear and do not be jealous for Christ's designation as "The Teacher".

[12] So He Delegates And Entrusts His Teaching To Worthy And Faithful Teachers.

(1 Tim 4:16) Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

(2 Tim 2:2) And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Please do not be under the misapprehension that His designations as Teacher and Shepherd have been misused or snatched from Him. On the contrary, His Glory is made manifest through the correct teaching by His appointed teachers.

[13] Even The Designation of the “Son Of God”

The Lord Jesus, undisputedly is the Son of God, e.g.

(John 9:35) Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, "Do you believe in the Son of God?"

(John 9:38) Then he said, "Lord, I believe!" And he worshipped Him.

In spite of this, He designates us as children or sons of God.

(John 1:12) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

(1 John 3:1) Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

[14] Our Sonship To God Is Different To Him Being the Son of God.

We are the sons of God through faith, love and adoption. But He is the Son of God through being of the same in essence and nature, hence He is called the “Son”, “The only Begotten Son” and “the Only Son”.

(John 1:18) No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

(John 3:18) "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

(1 John 4:9) In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

Here we see our designation as sons of God did not belittle nor compromised the Lord Jesus to His Father in any way. This designation is common to all and not restricted to the clergy.

[15] His Designation as “The Light” Is Shared By All.

(John 8:12) Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

(John 9:5) "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

(John 12:35) Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.

But He described us as the Light of The World.

(Mat 5:14-16) "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. {15} "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. {16} "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

It is inconceivable to imagine that the Lord has abdicated his Glory to grant it to His people.

[16] He Is The True Light, And We Are Witnesses To His Light

He is the Light of every one.

(John 1:9) That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.

His is My Light and My Salvation

(Psa 27:1) The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

He is The Unapproachable Light

(1 Tim 6:16) who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

He is The Marvelous Light

(1 Pet 2:9) But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

Our light, compared to His, is like that between the moon and the sun. The sun has the true source of light, while the moon is only a recipient and a mirror of this light.

The Lord's Light

He is the Source of Light
His Light is darkness-free.

Our Reflected Light

Our light is a reflection of His
Many times we could be
enveloped in darkness due to
sin

(1 John 1:5) This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

While John the Baptist was “great before God”, he was not the light, but a witness to it.

(Luke 1:15) "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

(John 1:7-8) This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. {8} He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.

[17] The Designations Of Bishop And Overseer

The same analogy can be used for bishops and the overseers.

It Was Said Of Christ

(1 Pet 2:25) For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

It Was Said Of Human Priesthood

(Titus 1:7) For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

In the context of the prophesy about Bethlehem, Christ is describes as an overseer.

It Was Said Of Christ

(Mat 2:6) 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, Are not the least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.'"

It Was Said Of Human Priesthood

(1 Tim 5:17) Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

[18] How Awesome Is The Difference Between Christ And That of Human Bishops And Overseers.

Christ is the all in all Bishop and overseer, while the human clergy works within a limited sphere. They are shepherds under the shepherdship of Christ

He is the Bishop and Overseer of our souls (1 Peter 2:25), while they as commissioned bishops and priests who were entrusted with this responsibility.

[19] The Same Applies To The Designation Of A Priest

Christ is our eternal Priest, while Saint Paul clearly indicates the human priesthood.

(Heb 5:6) As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek";

[20] There Is A Principal Difference Between The Priesthood Of Christ And The Human Priesthood

Christ is the priest and the sacrifice who offered Himself. As for the human priests, they are servants to the same sacrifice, which is still Christ.

This is why Saint Paul said:

(Heb 7:27) who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.

(Heb 9:12) Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Christ's Priesthood is the source of human priesthood, and its foundation.

Without Christ who offered Himself, Christian priesthood would have nothing to offer on the altar.

Christ granted forgiveness of our sins through His Sacrifice and His priesthood, which enables human priests to convey forgiveness as his vicars through the benefits of His Blood.

So human priesthood, is not at all contradicting nor hampering Christ's priesthood, but a continuation.

[21] How About John 17:22

After expounding many of Christ's designations conferred on the disciples, without infringing on His glory, I wish to ask the zealots for His glory a question with regard to the following verse:

(John 17:22) "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

We are transfixed in awe when we see the great love of God towards His servants and children. But we are not at all jealous for God.

(John 17:5) "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

He glorifies them with the glory fitting and bearable to their human nature.

He gave them the glory of His service which He was anointed for, as a Priest, King and a Prophet.

[22] He Only Handed Them A Portion Of What The Three Wise Men Presented Him, i.e. Gold, Frankincense And Myrrh

- Their glory in service and leadership is symbolised by this gold.
- Their glory in the priesthood is symbolised by the frankincense.
- Their glory in bearing the cross is symbolised by the myrrh.

The glory of gold, incense and myrrh is only a glimpse of His infinite glory.

And for those who are jealous for the Glory of God, we wish to discuss with them 2 further points.

- 1) God glorifies His creation
- 2) Gods exalts His servants.

THE LORD GLORIFIES HIS CREATION

[23] God Grants Glory To All His Creation, Not Only The Living Creatures

(1 Cor 15:40-41) There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the

glory of the terrestrial is another. {41} There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

(Mat 6:28-29) "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; {29} "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

So God grants glory to the whole creation.

[24] Let Us Contemplate The Priestly Robes Ordered By God For Aaron The Chief Priest For "Glory & Beauty"

(Exo 28:2-3) "And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. {3} "So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments, to consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as priest.

Here we see God Himself orders such garments for His own priest. He specified the fabric, the ornamentation and the fashion. God also ordered that the tailors be carefully selected and that they should be filled of the spirit of wisdom

(Exo 28:6) "and they shall make the ephod of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, artistically worked.

(Exo 28:15) "You shall make the breastplate of judgment. Artistically woven according to the workmanship of the ephod you shall make it: of gold, blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, you shall make it.

(Exo 28:22) "You shall make chains for the breastplate at the end, like braided cords of pure gold.

(Exo 28:37-38) "And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. {38} "So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD.

(Exo 28:40) "For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty.

What a wonderful glory granted to Aaron by God, not only in the way of dress but also in the matter of intercession.

Let me hasten to add that it was not only Aaron, but also his children

(Exo 28:40-41) "For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty. {41} "So you shall put them on Aaron your brother and on his sons with him. You shall anoint them, consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister to Me as priests.

Did God restrict or compromise on His own glory by honouring His priests? Or was it a pleasure for God to see His servants glorified and beautified?

Here we see God's own care and concern for the good of His priest.

Would any one dare describe Aaron as proud and egotistic, because he was clothed with such excellent colours? If you do, then you may carry on to hurl the same accusation at the lilies of the field, as God has clothed them in such splendour well beyond that of Solomon.

So what is Aaron's crime, or the lilies, if God is so generous to clothe them as such.

So if God gives great glory to the lilies, would He refrain from glorifying His own servants and vicars? Certainly not.

[24] How About The Glory Granted By God To Moses And Elijah On The Mountain Of Transfiguration?

Here we see that in great awe of this glory, Saint Peter said:

(Mat 17:4) Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

This is obviously God's way of glorifying two of His servants who offered Him sacrifices. This is a glimpse of the glory of the resurrection, where we would be in glory equal to the angels of heaven.

(Mat 22:30) "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven."

[25] Another Glorified Creatures Are The Angels

(2 Cor 11:14) And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

Here the angels are described as “angels of light”. Also Psalm 103 describes the angels as “mighty and powerful”

[26] The Glory Of The Saints And The Repentant

Look at the repentant described by the Book of Ezekiel

(Ezek 16:9-14) "Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. {10} "I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. {11} "I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. {12} "And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. {13} "Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. {14} "Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord GOD.

How wonderful it is to know that God complements people’s beauty with His own!

[27] This Has Been God’s Way From The Beginning “ He Created Man On His Own Image”

(Gen 1:26-27) Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." {27} So God created man in His own image; in the

image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

[28] God Also Grants His People The Power To Perform Miracles.

Here we see God gives glory to His own people by supporting their work with miracles:

(Josh 3:7) And the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.

Here we also see the perfect proof in God glorifying people through helping them with miracles:

(John 14:12) "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.

We can read many of these miracles in the Scriptures, see a full manifesto of God given gifts to people in 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

[29] Non Of His Children Seek Any Glory, But Rather, It is God Who Gives.

Here we see Saint Paul emphasise such election by God:

(Rom 8:17) and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

(Rom 8:30) Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

[30] The Most Significant Glory Is That Of The Resurrection

(Rom 8:18) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

(Phil 3:21) who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

(1 Th 2:12) that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

(1 Pet 1:5) who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

Also Saint Paul describes the resurrected bodies:

(1 Cor 15:43-49) It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. {44} It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. {45} And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. {46} However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. {47} The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. {48} As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. {49} And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

Saint Peter describes himself as a partaker of the awaited glory. He also speaks about the “Crown of glory awaiting the faithful in the Second Coming of Christ”.

THE LORD EXALTS HIS CREATION

[31] The Lord Jesus Christ Testified To The Greatness Of John The Baptist.

(Mat 11:11) "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Also it is amazing the John The Baptist is described before his birth:

(Luke 1:15) "For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.

“be great in the sight of the Lord,” is an amazing statement showing God’s modesty and love in exalting His sons, who are in essence dust and ashes.

[32] Abraham The Patriarch Exalted By God

(Gen 12:2) I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.

The Scriptures, in various places, describe in detail the greatness of Abraham. For example as an intercessor for Sodom (Genesis 18).

Also the families of the earth are blessed in Abraham.

(Gen 12:3) I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Also the angels conveyed the poor man to Abraham's bosom:

(Luke 16:22) "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

[33] We Should Never Forget The Exaltation Granted By God To Our Lady Virgin Mary

The Lord singled her out saying:

(Luke 1:35) And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

(Luke 1:48-49) For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. {49} For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name.

It is amazing to see that Virgin Mary's simple greeting resulted in Elizabeth and her unborn child receiving the Holy Spirit in a joyful way:

(Luke 1:41-44) And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. {42} Then she spoke

out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! {43} "But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? {44} "For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

[34] The Lord Exalted Moses The Prophet In A Remarkable Way

Moses' miracles and wonders were many and was exalted by God above Pharaoh.

(Exo 7:1) So the LORD said to Moses: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

Also The LORD defended the greatness of Moses before Aaron and Miriam. He also struck Miriam with leprosy because she slandered Moses.

(Num 12:6-8) Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. {7} Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. {8} I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?"

[35] The Lord Exalted The Commons

(Mat 5:19) "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

He also praised the humble:

(Mat 18:1, 4) At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The Cannanite woman was exalted by Christ, in spite of Noah's curse to her ancestors:

(Mat 15:28) Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

[36] The Lord Even Exalted Cities And Nature

(Gen 1:16) Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.

(Jonah 4:11) "And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left; and much livestock?"

[37] Here We can Speak About The Exaltation Granted By God To The Priesthood

We spoke previously about the authority granted to the clergy, we illustrated their power to forgive, and to grant the Holy Spirit. We also spoke about their designations and rank, and how He assigned them with the calling, the selection, the

mission, the anointing.....etc. Here we quote examples to their exaltation by God:

(Rev 4:4) Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.

Here He allows these priests to sit before Him, while the Seraphim and the Cherubim, are standing in awe:

(Isa 6:2) Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

We could follow John's description of them raising to God the prayers of the saints.

(Rev 5:8) Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

God also describe some of His priests with greatness.

(Lev 21:10) 'He who is the high priest among his brethren, on whose head the anointing oil was poured and who is consecrated to wear the garments, shall not uncover his head nor tear his clothes;

Then let us not be jealous for God. It is His decision to exalt His sons, without compromising nor affecting His own Greatness and Majesty.

[38] In Essence, Greatness Is The Lord's And Only His. But Out Of Modesty, Confers It On Others

God's greatness is infinite, while human greatness is finite. Our greatness pales into insignificance compared to His own.

Gods own Greatness emanates from His divine essence. Our human greatness is acquired or conferred, but in all cases it is not our own because we are dust and ashes.

The greatness of God is perfect, holy and unlimited. While mans greatness is imperfect, tarnished and temporary.

[39] So It Is Not Warranted For Some One To Be Jealous For God Because He Confers Greatness On His Slaves

We are all slaves, and will remain as such, regardless of how much and how great any of us is endowed with exaltation and greatness. Our greatness is only a relative thing in comparison with our compatriots. But before God we are all His servants. The more he grants us, the more humble should we become.

[40] In Conclusion We Say To The Ones Who Feel Jealous For God Because Of The Priesthood.

- God gave others, why complain against His gifts?
- God exalts His children, So why are some annoyed of this?
- God does not take this as compromising His own Glory, so why the jealousy?
- Are you more royal than the King Himself?
- Do you wish to consider God's gifts a contradiction to His Glory?

Are you jealous because of God's utterance in Isaiah?

(Isa 42:8) I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.

THE MEANING OF AND MY GLORY I WILL NOT GIVE TO ANOTHER

[41] The Glory In Question Is The Divine Glory.

God glorified and exalted us in many means and ways. But non of it could, in any shape or form, be compared with God's infinite glory, which is beyond our comprehension.

The Divine Glory is not bestowal.

This is the glory sought after by Satan, which caused his demise. This is the Glory coveted by Satan, and is the same Glory he tempted Adam and Eve with.

(Isa 14:14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'

(Gen 3:5) "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

[42] The Remainder Of The Isaiah 42:8 Clearly Points To Idol Worship

(Isa 42:8) I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.

[43] All The Succeeding Chapters Of Isaiah Revolve Around The Same Meaning

(Isa 43:10-11) "You are My witnesses," says the LORD, "And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me. {11} I, even I, am the LORD, And besides Me there is no savior.

(Isa 44:6) "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.

(Isa 45:5-7) I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, {6} That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; {7} I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.'

[44] No One Can Claim That The Priesthood Is Robbery of God's Divine Glory

Such accusations are not correct, especially that all priests are vicars operating through delegated authority conferred on them by God Himself.

CHAPTER 9

PRIESTHOOD IS A SERVICE

SERVICE

[1] We Stated In The Previous Chapters How Priests Are Called, Selected And Anointed By God

We have shown that the priesthood is for an elect group, for specific and unique work.

We also said that the men of the priesthood are called angels, ambassadors, vicars, shepherds, fathers and rulers. They also enjoyed sharing some of Christ's designations. We also stated that God entrusted them to head His flock, to rule and to absolve. He made them blessed and a source of blessings.

This lead some to feel jealous on God's behalf.

This is why, in this chapter, we will concentrate on the priesthood's role as a servants.

They are servants, even if they are vicars, ambassadors. They are servants of the Word, servants of the altar, servants of the reconciliation, servants of Spiritual matters, servants of holiness and servants of the Sacraments.

[2] We Call Them Servants So that they may Adorn Themselves With The Spirit Of Humility.

We are also hoping to appease those who seem to be zealous for God.

[3] Here We See Saint Paul In The First Epistle To The Corinthians Emphasises The Theme Of Service

(1 Cor 3:4-6) For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? {5} Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? {6} I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

Saint Paul saw himself as a mere servant, and his apostolic work as service.

When Saint Paul needed Saint Mark's help he said:

(2 Tim 4:11) Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

[4] Judas Iscariot Was One Of The Apostles whose work was Described As Service

(Acts 1:17) "for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."

(Acts 1:25) "to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

[5] Hence Our Fathers The Apostles Were The Servants Of The New Testament

(2 Cor 3:6) who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

(2 Cor 3:8-9) how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? {9} For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.

THE PRIESTHOOD IS A SERVICE FOR GOD
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[6] This Has Been So From Old

(Isa 61:6) But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, They shall call you the servants of our God. You shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, And in their glory you shall boast.

(Joel 1:9) The grain offering and the drink offering Have been cut off from the house of the LORD; The priests mourn, who minister to the LORD.

[7] The Same Is Reiterated In The New Testament

(2 Cor 3:3) clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

(2 Cor 6:4) But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,

(2 Cor 11:23) Are they ministers of Christ?; I speak as a fool; I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often.

THREE BASIC SERVICES

The priests are Servants of God and Christ. But what is their duty statement as servants?

They serve in all directions, but we will highlight three (3) main areas of service:

- (1) The Service of the Altar
- (2) The Service of the Scriptures
- (3) The Reconciliation Service.

[8] As For The Service Of The Altar

We read in Joel:

(Joel 1:13) Gird yourselves and lament, you priests; Wail, you who minister before the altar; Come, lie all night in sackcloth, You who minister to my God; For the grain offering and the drink offering Are withheld from the house of your God.

Also the New Testament

(Luke 1:8) So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,

(Luke 1:23) And so it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house.

(Heb 8:3) For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer.

(Heb 9:26) He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

[9] They Are Also Servants Of The Scriptures

When the seven deacons were ordained the apostles described their apostolic service, as one of the Word of God..

(Acts 6:4) "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Here we see the importance of serving the word.

Also Saint Luke quoted the apostolic service of the word as his main role:

(Luke 1:2) just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us,

Serving the word is explained by Saint Paul as serving of the Scriptures.

(Eph 3:7) of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

(1 Th 2:4) But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.

Serving the word is to carry on preaching and teaching.

(Mark 16:15) And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

(2 Tim 4:2-5) Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. {3} For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; {4} and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. {5} But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

[10] Service Of Reconciliation

Here we observe what Saint Paul said:

(2 Cor 5:18-20) Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. {19} that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. {20} Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

[11] Reconciliation Includes Calling on People To Believe And Repent

The call to repentance is an involved topic, which encompasses preaching, confession, guidance and correct spiritual leadership.

[12] In Essence, Reconciliation Is All The Facets Of Pastoralship.

SERVICE IS THE WORK OF THE LORD JESUS AND THE ANGELS AND THE APOSTLES

[13] Let No One Belittle The Value Of Service

The Lord Jesus, who is our Master, called Himself a servant.

(Mat 20:28) "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

(Mark 10:45) "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

(Heb 8:1-2) Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, {2} a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

[14] The Angels Are also referred to As Servants

(Heb 1:14) Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

[15] Our Fathers The Apostles were also called Servants.

As servants of the New Testaments, there are numerous references with regard to their service.

Moses of the Old Testament Is called a servant.

(Heb 3:5) And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward,

VICARS AND SERVANTS

[16] There Is No Distinction Between Their Work As Vicars And Servants

Before God they are servants, and before the congregation they are ambassadors and vicars.

(1 Cor 4:1-2) Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. {2} Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

[17] Here We Observe The harmony Between Service And Vicarship

(Luke 12:42-44) And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? {43} "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. {44} "Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

In these verses we observe this synonymy.

[18] The Apostles Combined The Service Of Reconciliation with their Ambassadorship.

(2 Cor 5:18,20) Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the

ministry of reconciliation, ...Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.



CHAPTER 10

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PRIESTHOOD

QUESTION (1)

Priesthood and Imparting Blessings to Others

Is conceivable to obtain a blessing from a human being? Especially that God is the source of blessing, while humans are sinful.

How can a human being, who is under God's judgment, grant blessings?

ANSWER

[1] There Is No Dispute That God Is The Source Of Blessings

He blessed Adam & Eve

(Gen 1:28) Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

He blessed the Sabbath and sanctified it.

(Gen 2:3) Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified

He blessed Noah and His Sons

it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

(Gen 9:1) So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

He Blessed Job in his old age.

(Job 42:12) Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys.

He Blessed Abraham

(Gen 12:2-3) I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. {3} I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

He commanded that His blessings be publicly read on the mountain

(Deu 27:12) "These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, when you have crossed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin;

Also in the New Testament:

He blessed His disciples

(Luke 24:50) And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

He blessed the children

(Mark 10:16) And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.

He blessed the bread in the Sacrament of communion

Mat 26:26) And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

[2] But God's Blessing Does Not Contradict Nor Excludes Human Blessings

We will quote a number of examples of such human blessing, and endeavour to highlight the following:

- The blessings of the Old Testament Patriarchs.
- The blessings of the clergy
- The blessings of the prophets and the righteous men.
- The blessing of the poor
- The blessings by anyone especially the parents'.

[3] We Will Discover That Their Blessings Emanates From God

Our examples, God willing, expound all the above.

We will dwell also on curses uttered by them, which were as if from God Himself. For example, the curse of Noah to Canaan, which still stood at the time of Christ.

(Mat 15:22) And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

(Mat 15:26) But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

The Blessing Of The Patriarchs

[4] Our Father Noah Blessed His Sons Sam & Ham And Cursed Canaan

Would it be fitting to say that Noah, being human, exceeded his limits by blessing his sons? Certainly not.

[5] Our Father Isaac Blessed Jacob And Followed That By Giving A Blessing To Esau.

Isaac's' words were as if uttered by God Himself. His blessing was fulfilled, since our Master the Lord Jesus Christ came from the descendants of Jacob.

(Gen 28:3) "May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples;

Was the patriarch Isaac mistaken when he said:

(Gen 27:4) "And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die."

(Gen 27:33) Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who? Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me? I ate all of it before you came, and I have blessed him; and indeed he shall be blessed."

Isaac's blessing was in fulfilment of the prophecy given to Rebecca after she became pregnant:

(Gen 25:23) And the LORD said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

Also Saint Paul said:

(Heb 11:20) By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

[6] Similarly Jacob Blessed The Sons of Joseph

(Gen 48:14) Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.

(Heb 11:21) By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

Even while blessing the sons of Joseph, Jacob crossed his hands, so the right hand was on the head of the youngest.

(Gen 48:20) So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will bless, saying, 'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!' " And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

Also Jacob blessed his twelve (12) sons, and as he uttered it was for each of them.

So who can dare to criticise our father Jacob for blessing his sons (Gen 49). Who would dare say to Jacob: “Blessing comes from God!, Or could one question Jacob saying : “ How would a human confer blessings”.

[7] The Fathers Were A Blessing In Themselves

God blessed many people, and attributed the blessings of others to the patriarchs and the prophets. God said to Abraham:

(Gen 12:2) I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing

Also First Kings Chapter 17 tells the blessings of Elijah in the house of the widow of Sidon, and Second Kings Chapter 4 tells of the blessings of Elisha in the house of the Shonamite woma.

Also the Lord has specifically blessed Photiphar for the sake of Joseph:

(Gen 39:5) So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field.

(Zec 8:13) And it shall come to pass That just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, So I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, Let your hands be strong.'

[8] Those Who Object the Blessings From The Men Of God is to their Loss.

Such person, has not even reached the level of Essau:

(Gen 27:34) When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me; me also, O my father!"

(Gen 27:38) And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me; me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

In spite of all Essau's shortcomings, he still believed in the benefits of his father's blessings.



The Blessing Of The priesthood

[9] Here We Quote The Example Of Moses And Aaron The Priests

(Psa 99:6) Moses and Aaron were among His priests, And Samuel was among those who called upon His name; They called upon the LORD, and He answered them.

Moses blessed the workers.

(Exo 39:43) Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the LORD had commanded, just so they had done it. And Moses blessed them.

[10] Aaron And His Sons Were Commanded By God To Bless The People.

(Num 6:22-27) And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: {23} "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, "This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: {24} "The LORD bless you and keep you; {25} The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; {26} The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.'" {27} "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

[11] Hence The Priestly Blessing Emanates From God

From the above verses we conclude that the priests invoked God's blessings on the people.

So to bless the people, is to pray to God to bestow His blessings on them.

[12] The Priests Work As Channels Communicating God's Blessings To The Congregation

God chose these channels, He commanded them to bless and He gave them the words of blessing.

So such blessings are from God, exactly as are the words of absolution.

[13] So Is It Fitting To Grumble And Say But They Are Only Human?

Or should we say that God blesses the congregation through them.

We also denote the same, in the blessing of Abraham by Melchizedek.

(Gen 14:18-19) Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. {19} And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

[14] Saint Paul contemplated on the above verses, deducing the superiority of Melchizedek's priesthood above Aaron's.

(Heb 7:1) For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

(Heb 7:7) Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better.

So Melchizedek was an authorised channel of blessing, emanating from God.

[15] The Clergy Not Only Bless The Laity But Also The Holy Sacraments

(1 Cor 10:16) The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

After considering the blessings of the patriarchs and the clergy, let us proceed to the blessing of one another.

<p>The blessings of the prophets and the righteous men</p>

[16] Saul Came Out To Be Blessed By Samuel

(1 Sam 13:10) Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him.

Also king David gave his blessings:

(1 Chr 18:10) he sent Hadoram his son to King David, to greet him and bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him (for Hadadezer had been at war with Tou); and Hadoram brought with him all kinds of articles of gold, silver, and bronze.

Solomon, being the anointed of God, blessed the people:

(1 Ki 8:14) Then the king turned around and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing.

(2 Chr 6:3) Then the king turned around and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing.

[17] Simeon Blesses Saint Mary And Saint Joseph

(Luke 2:33-34) And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. {34} Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against

[18] Other Glaring Examples of Blessings

(Prov 11:11) By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

(Prov 28:20) A faithful man will abound with blessings, But he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.

Other blessings

[19] Parental Blessings

Blessings are gained by utterance from the parents, or when their offspring honour them.

(Eph 6:2) "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise:

The promise mentioned above is found in the first Commandments:

(Exo 20:12) "Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.

[20] The Other Blessing Is Received Through Serving The Poor

(Job 29:13) The blessing of a perishing man came upon me, And I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

So the perishing poor were a blessing to Job, who served them.

Here we see that the words of blessings from the needy, can be of great benefit. Even serving the poor in secret has its own blessings.

[21] We Obtain Blessings Through the Utterance of others.

Saint Paul exhorting people to bless, and not curse. This exhortation was probably based upon the words of our Lord from the Sermon on the mount.

(Rom 12:14) Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

(Mat 5:44) "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

The same meaning is reiterated by Saint Peter.

(1 Pet 3:9) not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.

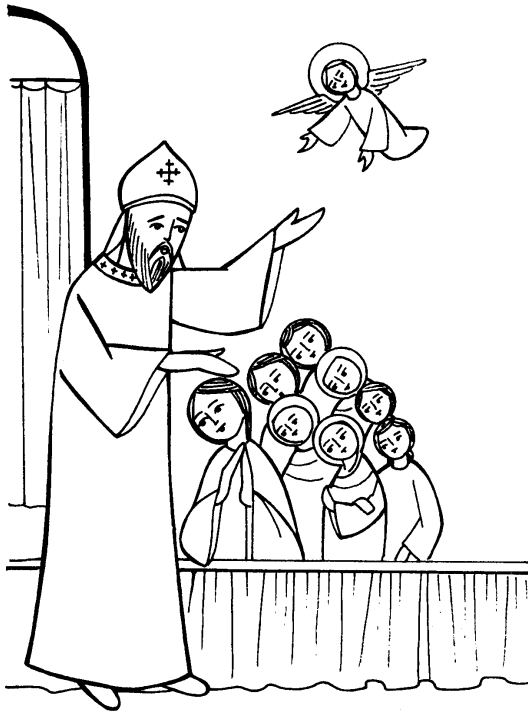
[22] So If It Is Possible To be A Blessed From By Others, How About The Priest?

So the question at hand which is: “*Is conceivable to obtain a blessing from a human being?*” is not biblically based.

On the other hand, a priest who ceases from blessing the people is contravening the Lord’s command and has failed in fulfilling his obligations.

[23] What Amazes Me is That The Ones Who Are Attempting To Curtail The Priestly Blessings Are Themselves Using The Expression “God Bless”.

It is noticeable that many of our Evangelical brethren use expression “God Bless”. They often use this expression when expressing their good wishes to the clergy!



QUESTION (2)

Why Address The Clergy “my lord’

Why do we address some clergy as *Rabbi* “My lord”? While we have one Lord God. Who said:

(Mat 23:8) "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

ANSWER

[1] The Lord Jesus Uttered These Words to Criticise The Pride of the Pharisees And The Scribes.

(Mat 23:6-8) "They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, {7} "greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi.' {8} "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

He said this to abolish the leadership and control of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were focused on self-glory in preparation for the new church leadership.

[2] This He said to His Disciples only and not to the general public.

(Mat 23:8-10) "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. {9} "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. {10} "And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ.

Here He commanded His disciples not to call anyone father or teacher since the disciples and their successors were to become the fathers and teachers of all.

[3] The title of “lordship” was Granted to Man since the beginning since man was created in the image and likeness of God.

(Gen 1:28) Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

God even said before the creation of Man:

(Gen 1:26) ... Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion...

Man being in the image of God, is a lord and master. He is God's vicar on earth. Man's lordship does not contradict God's Lordship or sovereignty.

It is a God given gift, and never in contention with God, but it must be exercised in humility.

[4] Here We Have The Clear Example Of Joseph

God granted Joseph the title of lordship, superiority and fatherhood all at once. But Joseph's humility was evident in all his dealings.

(Gen 45:8) "So now it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

There are many other examples, where God made His children lords and masters, without them losing their humility and modesty.

[5] Is It not Wonderful how God Made Joseph lord Over Egypt? What About Moses

(Exo 7:1) So the LORD said to Moses: "See, I have made you as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.

(Exo 4:16) "So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.

Naturally Moses was not divine, as divinity is God's alone. But Moses was made superior in great splendour and glory. This is the same Moses whom God described in great detail.

(Num 12:6-8) Then He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. {7} Not so with My servant Moses; He is faithful in all My house. {8} I speak with him face to face, Even plainly, and not in dark sayings; And he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant Moses?"

[6] Also We Learn From The Lordship And Superiority Granted To Jacob

(Gen 27:29) Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!"

This is a great display of lordship and superiority, but it was always mixed with humility. The bowing (prostration) to Jacob, was not to worship, but rather as a sign of respect and awe.

Here we see Jacob's humility when he met his brother:

(Gen 33:3) Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

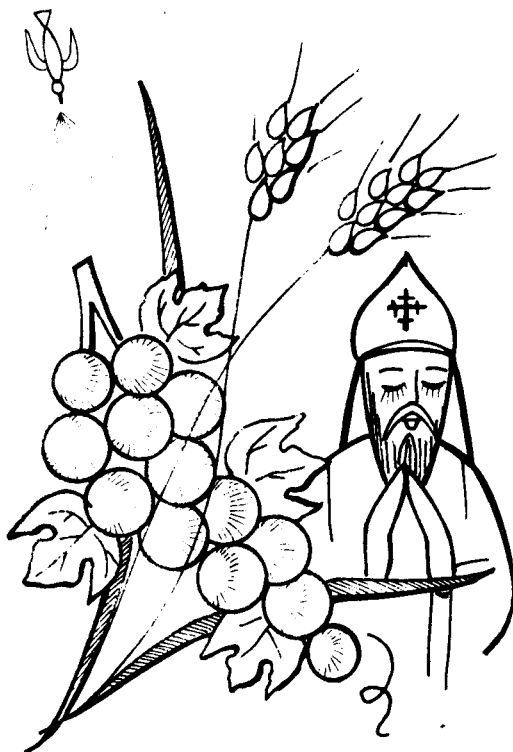
[7] Hence, The Lordship And Superiority Of The Priesthood Does Not Obstruct Humility

Yes the bishop is God's vicar.

(Titus 1:7) For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money,

So all respect is offered to the bishop for his office and his standing. Especially by laying on of hands, he grants the Holy Spirit.

Hence the lordship is for the purpose of order in the church and it not a form of suppression of others as was the case with the scribes and the pharisees.



QUESTION (3)

Is Prostration Only For Worship Or Could It Also Express Respect?

Is it appropriate for people to bow or prostrate to some ranks of the clergy? Dose such a behaviour have Scriptural proof?

ANSWER

[1] It Has Been Customary To Prostrate Before The Bishop As A Vicar Of God (Titus 1:7).

So such prostration is not for the bishop, but for the God in his person.

For example the bishop is received in the church by a procession while the choir chants “Ep-Ouro” which means “O’ King Of Peace”. While the King of Peace is Christ, they are welcoming Christ in the person of His vicar.

Also when the bishop is present and while the Gospel is read, an introductory psalm is appended from a portion of Psalm 110

(Psa 110:4) The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

This psalm was a prophecy concerning Christ, but is chanted for the bishop, as the vicar.

An officer representing the President is usually received by the National Anthem, the anthem is played for the president, even if he is only represented by one of the officials.

[2] The Bowing Or Prostrating For The Bishop Is a sign of Respect And Not In Worship

Many bishops discourage people from prostrating in front of them, and in doing this, gain even more respect for their humility. Such bishops recognise that he is dust and ashes, and becomes exceedingly humbled.

[3] Now Let Us Consider The Biblical And Theological Basis Of The Two Types Of Prostration.

Any prostration meant for worshipping any thing but God, is unreservedly prohibited by the Scriptures.

(Deu 5:9) you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me,

(Mat 4:10) Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Expressing respect through prostration has been repeatedly mentioned in the bible. This type of prostration was offered to holy people and faith heroes, whom were taken as models for many. Various examples also show these people accepted prostration from others.

Prostration before humans; Is It Biblical?

[5] Holy Men Of God Prostrating Before Humans

For example, Patriarch Abraham, the father of all prophets, on purchasing a farm from certain people he bowed to the ground to honour them.

(Gen 23:7) Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

(Gen 23:12) Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land;

Was Abraham's prostration against his faith? Certainly not as he is one of the heroes of faith.

(Heb 11:8-10) By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. {9} By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; {10} for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

[6] Jacob the Patriarch Prostrated Before Esau His Brother

(Gen 33:3) Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

Did Jacob and his family blaspheme by prostrating before his brothers? Certainly not.

[7] Moses Prostrated Before His Father-In-Law

(Exo 18:7) So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent.

[8] David The Prophet Prostrates Before The Anointed Of God

(1 Sam 24:8) David also arose afterward, went out of the cave, and called out to Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed down.

Were they all wrong in their action?

It is obvious that they offered, by prostrating before a human, their respect. It would be most illogical to even doubt the faith or of these prominent fathers of faith.

Holy Men Of God Prostrating Before Angels

[9] Abraham Prostrated Before Angels

When the three men visited Abraham, he was not aware that God was among them. But he still prostrated before them.

*(Gen 18:2) So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground,
(Gen 18:4-5) "Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. {5} "And I will*

bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." They said, "Do as you have said."

[10] The Angels Did Not Object To Lot who Prostrated Before Them

(Gen 19:1) Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.

[11] Balaam Prostrated Before The Angel

The angel rebuked Balaam for hitting the donkey, but not for prostrating before him.

(Num 22:31) Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the Angel of the LORD standing in the way with His drawn sword in His hand; and he bowed his head and fell flat on his face.

[12] Saint John Prostrated Before The Angel Twice

The first time, the angel refused out of humility.

(Rev 19:10) And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

(Rev 22:8) Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things.

Prophets Who Accepted Prostration

[13] Holy Men Of God Accepted the Prostration of the People as an sign of Respect. It was never taken to Mean a Sign of Worship.

Many people prostrated before David the king and prophet:

(1 Sam 25:23) Now when Abigail saw David, she hastened to dismount from the donkey, fell on her face before David, and bowed down to the ground.

(2 Sam 1:2) on the third day, behold, it happened that a man came from Saul's camp with his clothes torn and dust on his head. So it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the ground and prostrated himself.

(2 Sam 9:6) Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, "Mephibosheth?" And he answered, "Here is your servant!"

(2 Sam 9:8) Then he bowed himself, and said, "What is your servant, that you should look upon such a dead dog as I?"

(2 Sam 14:4) And when the woman of Tekoa spoke to the king, she fell on her face to the ground and prostrated herself, and said, "Help, O king!"

(2 Sam 16:4) So the king said to Ziba, "Here, all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours." And Ziba said, "I humbly bow

before you, that I may find favor in your sight, my lord, O king!"

(2 Sam 19:18) Then a ferryboat went across to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. Now Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king when he had crossed the Jordan.

(1 Ki 1:16) And Bathsheba bowed and did homage to the king. Then the king said, "What is your wish?"

(1 Ki 1:31) Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and paid homage to the king, and said, "Let my lord King David live forever!"

[14] The Prophet Nathan Prostrated Before David

(1 Ki 1:23) So they told the king, saying, "Here is Nathan the prophet." And when he came in before the king, he bowed down before the king with his face to the ground.

Nathan the prophet was not mistaken to bow before the anointed of God.

[15] Also The Araunah Jebosite

(2 Sam 24:20) Now Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming toward him. So Araunah went out and bowed before the king with his face to the ground.

Also the Chief Priest:

(2 Sam 18:28) And Ahimaaz called out and said to the king, "All is well!" Then he bowed down with his face to the earth

before the king, and said, "Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who raised their hand against my lord the king!"

[16] Daniel Accepted The King Prostration.

(Dan 2:46) Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him.

[17] Elijah Accepted The Prostration Of The Military Captain

(2 Ki 1:13) Again, he sent a third captain of fifty with his fifty men. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and pleaded with him, and said to him: "Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight.

[18] Also, Elijah Accepted Prostration From The Shonimite Woman

(2 Ki 4:37) So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out.

[19] Solomon Prostrates To His Mother

(1 Ki 2:19) Bathsheba therefore went to King Solomon, to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her and bowed down to her, and sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king's mother; so she sat at his right hand.

He also accepted prostration from Adoniah.

(1 Ki 1:53) So King Solomon sent them to bring him down from the altar. And he came and fell down before King Solomon; and Solomon said to him, "Go to your house."

[20] Joseph Accepts His Brother's Prostration

(Gen 43:26) And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed down before him to the earth.

(Gen 44:6) So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words.

(Gen 44:14) So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, and he was still there; and they fell before him on the ground.

(Gen 50:18) Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we are your servants."

Prostration is a command from God

[21] Joseph's Brothers Prostrated Before Him in accordance to the Vision he received From God.

(Gen 37:7) "There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."

(Gen 37:9-10) Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me." {10} So he told it to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"

[22] Jacob Was Promised That Nations Will Prostrate Before Him

(Gen 27:29) Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, And blessed be those who bless you!"

[23] Also In The New Testament it Is A Clear Commandment By God

(Rev 3:9) "Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie; indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

These words were uttered by Christ to the bishop of the Church of Philadelphia.

Other Types Of Prostration

[24] Prostrations At Holy Places

(Psa 5:7) But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple.

[25] Somet Offer Prostration As Means of Apology

This is like the “Mitaniyas” which a person offer to another.

[26] The Bishop And The Patriarch Prostrates Before The People

Before the bishop starts the liturgy, he prostrates before the people saying “ I have sinned, forgive me”.

Therefore we need to understand the spiritual meaning rather than the literal, as the literal destroys.

QUESTION (4)

Was The Apostolic Authority Specific Only to them and their Era?

ANSWER

If such was true, then Christianity should of been a religion designed for a single generation, and not all.

Those who propagate such an idea are attempting to topple the Christian faith without realising. If all activities, rites and teachings at the time of the apostles were suspended, the Christian religion would have ceased to exist soon after the departure of the last disciple, saint John.

But if Christianity is to continue for all times, then the apostolic work should also continue uninterrupted even after the departure of the apostles.

Let us consider some examples.

[1] Teaching

The Lord Said to the disciples:

(Mat 23:8) "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren.

But the Teacher handed over the teaching to them:

(Mat 28:19-20) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, {20} "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Then the apostles handed the responsibility of teaching to their successors.

(1 Tim 4:16) Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

(2 Tim 2:2) And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

(2 Tim 4:5) But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

- So Christ handed teaching to the apostles
- Saint Paul received his authority to teach from Christ and the apostles.
- Saint Paul handed his teachings over to Timothy.
- Timothy handed his teachings over to entrusted people.
- Those entrusted people were qualified and authorised to carry on teaching others.
- And so on, from generation to generation, and forevermore..

Saint Paul handed his teaching to Titus, Luke, Tichicus and many others.

[2] The Thanksgiving “Communion”

The Lord handed His disciples the communion:

(Mat 26:26-28) And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." {27} Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. {28} "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

(1 Cor 11:23) For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;

In order to continue obeying the divine commandment of offering communion, the Church must have an entrusted group, who could carry on this service. But not anyone can conduct such sacrament, other than the entrusted apostles or their successors.

It is also inconceivable that this sacrament was only for the apostolic age, otherwise where would the succeeding generations stand in the light of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ who said: chapter 6 of the Gospel of Saint John.? For example:

(John 6:53) ... "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

Hence offering the Body and Blood is essential for the perpetuity of teaching.

[3] Baptism

It is impossible to imagine that baptism was only limited to the apostolic era, since it is direct link to the Salvation of Souls.

(Mark 16:16) "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.

(John 3:5) Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

(Acts 2:38) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Then baptism must continue for all ages, as it is directly linked to the Salvation, the Second Birth and the Forgiveness of Sin

He also commanded that only the apostles, were to baptize:

(Mat 28:19-20) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, {20} "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

So is it conceivable to eliminate such important sacrament, because the disciples departed to heaven? Certainly not.

(Gal 3:27) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

It is unthinkable to agree with the reasoning that such Christian elementary foundations were to perish because the apostles' era was no more.

[4] Granting The Holy Spirit

It is inconceivable to imagine a generation surviving without the presence of the Holy Spirit.

We should also consider the fact that the gift of granting the Holy Spirit to others, was exclusive to the apostles and not given to the congregation in general.

(Acts 8:14-17) Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, {15} who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. {16} For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. {17} Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was never given by anyone except the apostles (Refer to Acts 19).

So apostolic succession is of paramount necessity for the congregations beyond the apostolic era in order to receive the Holy Spirit.

[5] The Authority To Absolve And To Guide

(John 20:23) "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

How can such authority disappear with the death of the apostles? Is it fair for only a single generation to enjoy such blessings of forgiveness, guidance, etc.? Certainly not.

The authority to absolve and to bind, is essential, not only for forgiveness of sin, but also for the day to day running of the Church affairs, especially legislative matters, in line with God's Scriptures.

Limiting the authority to the apostolic era would have left the Church leaderless after the lapse of such era. Should we have suspend order, legislation and left the laity in a quandary about good and evil, right and wrong?

Every generation is usually confronted with new issues which require a religious opinion in it. Such problems need authorised clergy to legislate and to enforce the legislation:

(Mal 2:7) "For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, And people should seek the law from his mouth; For he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

(Mat 18:18) "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

The Church of God must be a leader in order and organisation:

(1 Cor 14:40) Let all things be done decently and in order.

One way of doing things decently and in order, is for the bishop to investigate and direct, as was the practice with Saint Paul:

*(1 Cor 11:34) But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. **And the rest I will set in order when I come.***

He also told Titus his disciple:

*(Titus 1:5) For this reason I left you in Crete, **that you should set in order the things that are lacking**, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you;*

Here we observe that the apostolic authority granted to Saint Paul by the Lord was dutifully handed over to his successor Titus.

[6] The Laying On Of Hands

The Lord Jesus Himself ordained servants, and authorised them to ordain successors. These successors were ordained to carry out the duties and to bear the responsibilities of the apostles.

The laying of hands on Paul and Barnabas:

(Acts 13:3) Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

The laying of hands by Saint Paul on Timothy:

(2 Tim 1:6) Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Also Saint Timothy laid hands on others:

(2 Tim 1:6) Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

Saint Paul commanded Saint Titus to the “laying of hands” to ordain priests:

(Titus 1:5) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you;

So the laying on of hands continued from Christ to Paul to Timothy and Titus and so on with the other apostles.

It was necessary for such authority to be handed over from generation to generation. Such was to maintain continuity of the priesthood, grace and the other blessings which comes with it.

[7] The Apostles Are The Foundation

(1 Pet 2:5) you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

So the Lord Jesus built His Kingdom on the foundation of the apostles. It is obvious that a building can not stop at the foundation, but it must grow and continue.

(Eph 2:20) having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone,

Hence the apostles were the foundation, but were not the complete building.

It is not logical to leave the apostolic foundation without building on it.

This is why the apostolic responsibility were handed down to their successors



QUESTION (5)

Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

Why do you single out that only the priests are allowed to teach? Why can't people with of zeal be allowed to teach as mentioned by St. Paul:

(1 Cor 9:16) For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!

ANSWER

“Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” is ascribed to Saint Paul.

If we inquire “Why would Saint Paul uttered such expression?”

We find the answer in the following verse:

(1 Cor 9:17) For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.

He was entrusted as a vicar to a stewardship, to preach and would have been condemned if he had neglected his responsibility.

Hence let us not read one verse in isolation or out of context. We should to read the whole chapter, consider the context and

see the circumstances of the speaker, then see if we come to the same conclusion.

On the other hand, why neglect Saint James' teaching?

(James 3:1) My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

We have observed that many people who teach authority, often fall in heretic and faulty teachings, causing many to stumble, taking on themselves great condemnation.

How can one compare himself with Saint Paul who was:

Commissioned By Christ	<i>(Acts 9:15) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.</i>
Commissioned By The Church	<i>(Acts 13:3) Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.</i>
Commissioned By The Holy Spirit	<i>(Acts 13:4) So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.</i>
Selected From The Womb	<i>(Gal 1:15-16) But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, {16} to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,</i>

Here I wish to ask: “ How will your conscience find rest, that you were sent by God?”

The ones sent by the Church would say, “The Church, which is authorised by God, sent us”, They also say:

(Mat 18:17) "And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Some may claim “I was sent by the Holy Spirit!”

How do you know that the Holy Spirit is behind your mission. Especially if you were demolishing parts of the Gospel Truth and the Church teaching?

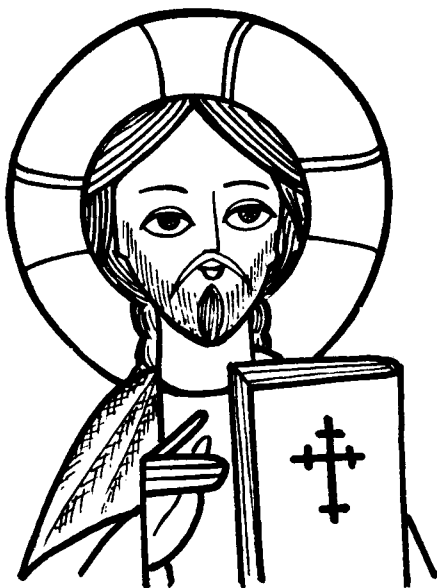
Please listen to the divine inspiration telling us what the Holy Spirit commanded the Church when He wanted to send Saint Paul and Saint Barnabas as missionaries:

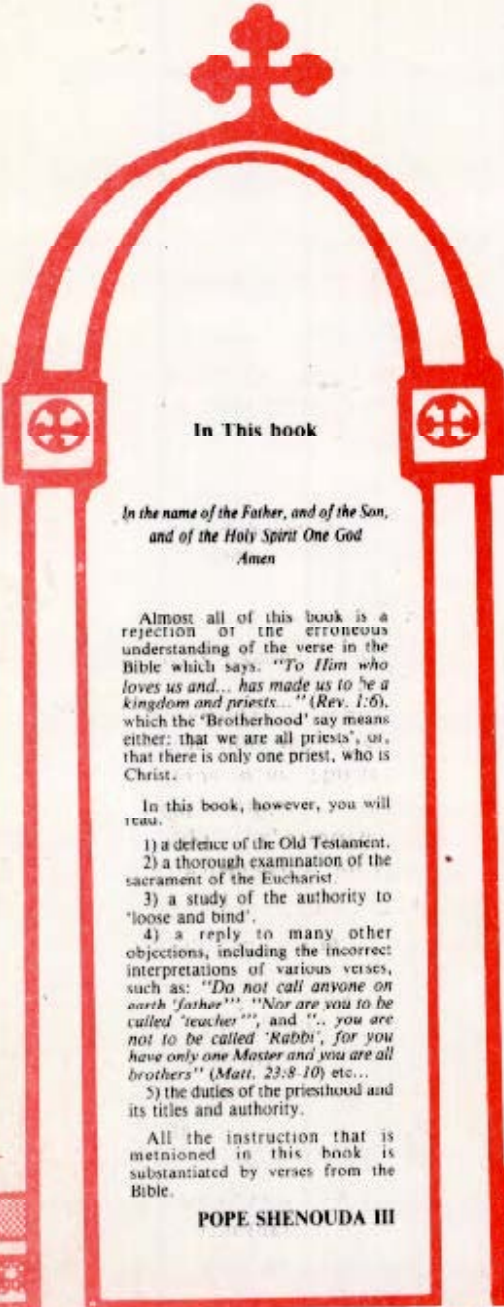
(Acts 13:2) As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

(Acts 13:3-4) Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. {4} So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

So the mission was carried out by the Holy Spirit, but through the Church.

People who are sent in this manner, are legitimate missionaries, and do not resort to a single verse; “ *Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!*”





In This book

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit One God
Amen*

Almost all of this book is a rejection of the erroneous understanding of the verse in the Bible which says: "To Him who loves us and... has made us to be a kingdom and priests..." (Rev. 1:6), which the 'Brotherhood' say means either: that we are all priests', or, that there is only one priest, who is Christ.

In this book, however, you will read:

- 1) a defence of the Old Testament.
- 2) a thorough examination of the sacrament of the Eucharist.
- 3) a study of the authority to 'loose and bind'.
- 4) a reply to many other objections, including the incorrect interpretations of various verses, such as: "Do not call anyone on earth 'father'", "Nor are you to be called 'teacher'", and "... you are not to be called 'Rabbi', for you have only one Master and you are all brothers" (Matt. 23:8-10) etc...
- 5) the duties of the priesthood and its titles and authority.

All the instruction that is mentioned in this book is substantiated by verses from the Bible.

POPE SHENOUDA III

