

MORE SEED & BREAD, ISSUE NO. 311

SCRIPTURAL APOSTLESHIP

By Robert Juneau

Among those who would identify themselves as “Christian,” the all-too-common thought is that the religion of Christianity is the one true religion, the only religion that brings one into relationship with God. These Christians would argue that all other religions are lacking the means by which one may be restored, forgiven, and positioned as a child of God. While this is true of all other religions, it might be a surprise to many that this is also true of the religion of Christianity. We need to understand that it is not religion that brings us into and fosters our relationship with God; it is God’s grace, and God’s grace comes to us through faith (Eph. 2:8). We also need to understand that in order for us to qualify as true believers, the object of our faith needs to be Jesus Christ Himself.

Unfortunately, the religion of Christianity has been presented to the world as just that, a religion. Over the centuries, most Christians have been taught to devote themselves and submit to the *religion* of Christianity instead of the *Person* of Christianity, Jesus Christ, and this is still true today. Have you ever heard people say, “I am of the ‘Methodist’ faith,” or “I am of the ‘Catholic’ faith”? This says much about their misunderstanding of the word *faith*. The object of these peoples’ faith is not clearly founded in the Lord, but seemingly in their religion.

The word *religion* is found only five times in the *King James Version* of the New Testament, once in Acts, twice in Galatians, and twice in James. Every one of these five occurrences is a reference to Biblical Judaism. The religion of Christianity is not mentioned once in the entire New Testament. This doesn’t seem to matter to those who are immersed in the Christian religion. It is because of the almost two thousand years that men strived to obligate us to the religion of Christianity rather than to Christ Himself that this attitude still prevails. Christ is given a place in this religion, but not the place He deserves. All too often, the need to fulfill a religious obligation is given first place in a Christian’s life. The book of Colossians has something very different to say

about this. **He [Christ] is the head of the body of the out-called: Who is the Sovereign, the firstborn of all who will rise from the dead; that in every respect He might have the first place. For it is in Him that the Divine fullness dwells without limit.** (Col. 1:18-19). Otis Q. Sellers' Resultant Version used throughout. Please read the narrative in Colossians 1:14-20 in which Paul is describing who Jesus Christ is. This passage says that in every respect He (Christ) has first place in the sight of the Father. He should have first place in our lives as well.

If a religious doctrine, ritual, or practice is part of our lives but has no foundation in Scripture, we are obligated to question it, challenge it, and, yes, even defy it. We should never have the attitude that "if my church practices it, it must be Biblical." Too many aspects of the religion of Christianity Biblically have no place in our lives, yet millions of professing believers all over the world engage in them daily. It is enough of a struggle to walk worthy of the Lord as it is. We don't need religion interfering and sidetracking us: . . . **Be filled with the realization of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. To the end you might walk worthy of the Lord in relation to all pleasing Him, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in the realization of God** (Col. 1:9-10).

Many things in our lives disrupt our walks that have nothing to do with religion, but when we are told that our relationships with God can be found and maintained through the organizations, authorities, and practices of religion, this leads to a much more serious digression. An inherent attribute of religion instills a sense of complacent attainment. Adhering to a religion engenders an attitude that we are doing right by God when we follow the rules, the edicts, and the directions of that religion. We are made to feel that we are "good to go" in the sight of God. This is very harmful to the real relationship God desires to have with us. It is a very sad thing indeed that men can steer off course so far that they can't see the truth and the simplicity of true faith in Christ. The deceptive ideas of men found in our religious institutions are surely some of the more insidious fiery darts in Satan's quiver: **In addition to all these, having taken up the great shield of faith by which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the wicked one** (Eph. 6:16). Other distractions in life may take our attention away from God, but they do not step in the place of God, as religion does.

So the big question is, "How can we be sure that we are making Christ Himself the object of our faith and nothing else, including religion?" The simple answer is that we must submit (Gk.-*metanoeo*) to God. See **Seed & Bread** Nos.106, *What About Repentance?*, and 107, *What Does Metanoeo Mean?* While God has seen fit to always provide a means toward that end, it is

clear that His methods have been different at different times throughout the history of mankind. This is the basis for the doctrinal ideas of dispensational theology. Men submitted to God in the majority of the Old Testament by submitting to the religion of Judaism. This was because God was in Judaism, and the means of keeping it was available to men on earth. Men could show Godly faith by submitting to the authorized men (Heb. - *qahal*) of Israel, the leaders whom God “apostled” to teach, lead, and guide Israel. (See **Seed & Bread** No. 125, *The Divine Interchange Principle*.) Men submitted to God in the Gospel Period by submitting to Christ. This was because God was in Christ, and He was available to men on earth. Men showed Godly faith by submitting to the authorized Man Jesus Christ, God Himself, “apostled” to live a perfect life, die on the cross for our sins, and open the door to the Kingdom of God on earth. Men submitted to God in the Acts Period by submitting to the Holy Spirit. This was because God was in the Holy Spirit and He was available to men on earth. Men showed Godly faith by submitting to the authorized men, the Apostles, the ones whom God “apostled” to be the leadership in Israel during the Kingdom of God on earth. Men submit to God today by submitting to Scripture. This is because God is in Scripture and it is available to men on earth. In this Dispensation of Grace, men can show Godly faith by submitting to the authorized word of God, the “apostled” salvation-bringing word of God, the Bible.

Ever since Paul’s proclamation in Acts 28:28 that ushered in the Dispensation of Grace, the Bible has been the “apostle” available to mankind, the means God has provided for us to submit to Him. Since then, there has been no less apostleship (authorization) upon the written word of God (original transcripts) than there was upon Christ or upon the Apostles of the New Testament. Just as much authority lies in the words of the Bible as did in the words of Jesus Christ when He was on earth or in the words of the Apostles when they were on earth. This is what I call “Scriptural apostleship.”

In the gospels, the Holy Spirit produced the generation (Gk.-*genea*) of God in a Man through *Christ’s* God-given power and authority. In the Acts Period, the Holy Spirit produced the generation of God in men through the *Apostles’* God-given power and authority. Today, the Holy Spirit produces the generation of God in men through *Scripture’s* God-given power and authority. In past dispensations, men spoke forth the perfect word of God because they had been commissioned or authorized (Gk.-*apostello*) by God to do so. (See **Seed & Bread** No. 005, *What Does Apostello Mean?*) When these authorized

ones spoke, their words produced the generation of God in the hearers. In this dispensation, the Scriptures speak forth the perfect word of God because they have been authorized by God to do so, and when this authorized word speaks to us, it produces the generation of God in the hearers. The Bible is the place to go if you want to be generated by God.

Throughout the Biblical history of mankind, submission to God by the means provided by God resulted in being generated (Gk.-*gennao*) by God. (See **Seed & Bread** No. 094, *Generation from Above*.) Israel was capable of being generated by God by submitting to the law through the religion of Judaism because God's authorization was upon Judaism. God cannot generate us today by involvement in a religion. This is because there is no religion today that has God's apostleship or authorization upon it. In this present dispensation, God's apostleship is upon the word of God; therefore, we must go to this "apostle" if we want to submit to and hear from God. A life of diligent study and responding in faith to what we learn is how **in every respect He might have the first place** in our lives (Col.1:18). Gaining the knowledge found in Scripture is how we can **be filled with the realization of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding** (Col. 1:9). We don't always rise to this challenge, but we need make this our daily goal.

The diligent study of and submission to God's Word, not an obligation to a religion, are the means to achieving the wonderful attributes of God described in Ephesians and Colossians. These two books, more than any other books of the Bible, describe and define the growth, the maturity, and the wisdom of God that can be our possession today. These attributes are ours for the taking, but in order to take on these attributes, we need God to generate them in our lives. This is the miracle that we should all be longing for: the miracle of a generation from God that results in a changed life. Today, we get this generation, this miracle, from only one source. How many professing Christians would skip going to church this Sunday if they had a chance to sit down and hear straight from one of the Apostles of the New Testament? If only we could come to understand that we have something equally valuable available to us today. We need to be ever-heedful in allowing Christ to have first place in our lives by daily engaging with God's apostle, the Bible.

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