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***"Sanctity them through thy Truth; Thy Word is truth."***

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## **LEADERSHIP**

**Text. One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. MATT. 23:8.**

Jesus addressed these words to the twelve, in the hearing of the multitude. And while they were a rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees, they were also designed to impress the disciples with the great truth, that should be felt in all coming time, that Christ is the head and leader of the church.

The prophetic eye of the Son of God could look forward to the close of the Christian age, and take in at a glance the errors and dangers of the church. And we may look back over her sad history and see that strict adherence to the principle set forth in the text has been important to the purity of the church, while departure from it has marked the progress of different forms of corrupted Christianity. The most prominent among these is the Roman church, which has set one man over the church whose claims to infallibility are sustained by that corrupt body.

In the discussion of the subject of leadership, we propose to bring out evidence from the words of Christ, and from the teaching and practices of the early apostles, that Christ is the leader of his people, and that the work and office of leadership has not been laid upon any one person, at any one time, in the Christian age. And for the views presented in this discourse we wish to be alone held responsible.

At the very commencement, in laying the foundation of the Christian church, as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw "two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And He said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Matt. 4:18,19. "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and He saith unto him, Follow me." Chap. 9:9. "And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom; and He said unto him, Follow me." Luke 5:27. "Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Matt. 19:77, 78.

The transfiguration was designed, not only to illustrate the future kingdom of glory, after the resurrection and change to immortality, but to impress the church with the glory of Christ as her head and leader. No part of that grand scene could be more impressive than the bright cloud that overshadowed them, and the "voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Matt. 17:5.

And at no time during his public ministry does Christ intimate that any one of his disciples should be designated as their leader. He does say, however, that he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." Matt. 23:11. And on the occasion of submitting the great commission to his first ministers, to be perpetuated in the Christian ministry to the close of the age, Christ gives the pledge that ever has been and ever will be the supporting staff of every true minister, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." Matt. 28:20

Christ's ministers have ever had a world-wide message. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." And wherever their footprints have been seen upon the mountains, or in the valleys, there Christ has been by the ministration of his holy angels, and the teachings of the Holy Ghost. "I am with you" is the soul-inspiring promise to every true minister. Christ proposes to lead his servants, and it is their privilege to approach the throne of grace, and receive from their sovereign Leader, fresh rations, and orders direct from headquarters.

And there is no intimation that the apostles of Christ designated one of their number above another as their leader. Paul would have the Corinthians follow him only as he followed Christ. He says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you." 1 Cor. 11:1, 2. Paul, so far from claiming to be the head of the church at Corinth, and securing their obedience, sympathy, and benevolence on this ground, would shake them off from seeking to be directed by him. He exalts Christ as their leader in the first sentence of the very next verse. **"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ."**

The typical system related to redemption no less than the Christian. And everything in the Bible, whether in the figures of the Old Testament, or in the facts of the New, has been revealed to a lost world through our adorable Redeemer.

**Christ, then, is the leader of his people in all the ages.** At the opening of the Jewish system, he chose one man as a subordinate leader of the people. At the beginning of the Christian church, he chose twelve. Moses was a faithful servant in the former. And Christ said of the twelve in the latter, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." As a servant in the Jewish church, Moses led the Hebrews in the wilderness, not by his own wisdom, however superior, but by direct communications from Christ, who was the angel that was with him in the church in the wilderness. Acts 7:37, 38. And Christ leads the Christian church, by his ambassadors, through the ministration of angels, attended by the Holy Spirit, in harmony with the written word.

The foregoing expresses our solemn convictions relative to the leadership of Christ, and the relation which his ministers sustain to their great Leader, to one another, and to the church. But too many have left the great question of leadership here, with the truth expressed only in part. They have passed over the teachings of Christ and his apostles, relative to discipline, and the proper means of securing unity in the ministry and in the church, and do not let them have their proper qualifying bearing upon the subject.

This has opened a wide door for men to enter the ministry who had not submitted their judgment and will to Christ as their leader, while at the same time they take the broadest ground, and exercise the greatest freedom relative to the right of private judgment. **Creed power has been called to the rescue in vain.** It has been truly said that "The American people are a nation of lords."

In a land of boasted freedom of thought and of conscience, like ours, **church force cannot produce unity; but has caused divisions**, and has given rise to religious sects and parties almost innumerable. And there are not a few professing Christians who reject church organization on account of the use that has been made of creed and church power. Some of these, however, in their mistaken zeal, in the advocacy of religious freedom, are disposed to trample on the rights of others, and use their boasted "liberty for a cloak of maliciousness."

**The remedy, however, for these deplorable evils is found in the proper use of the simple organization**, and church order set forth in the New Testament Scriptures, and in the means Christ has ordained for the unity and perfection of the church. That he has appointed officers, and also other means by which to lead his people, and for the good order, purity, and unity of the church is abundantly proved by such texts as 1 Cor. 12: 28-30; Eph. 4:11-13. \_And no man can show proof that these have been removed from the church by the authority that placed them there, or give any good reasons why they should be removed.

But here we wish it distinctly understood that officers were not ordained in the Christian church, to order, or to command the church, and "to lord it over God's heritage." In the case of difference of opinion that arose in some of the primitive churches relative to circumcision and the keeping of the law of Moses, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, the apostles and elders at Jerusalem acted as counselors, in a manner to give room for the Holy Ghost to act as Judge. Christ will lead his people, if they will be led. He came into that assembly by his Spirit, and found apostles, elders, and all the brotherhood in a teachable frame of mind and at once led them out of their difficulties. In this case, at an early date in the Christian church the true doctrine of the leadership of Christ and the equality of the ministerial brotherhood stands the test, and the triumphant record is immortalized among 'he acts of inspired men.

The report of that meeting at Jerusalem to settle a festering difficulty, commences on this wise: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." And the brethren which were from among the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria and Celicia, "rejoiced for the consolation." Differences settled in this way frequently seem more than settled, and generally remain settled; while those disposed of by the exercise of mere church authority are seldom really settled at all.

But when we say that the ambassador for Christ cannot yield his judgment to any but Christ, we do not mean that a young minister, or any one whose ministry has been marked with serious imperfection, and even grave mistakes, should exalt his opinion above his brethren, and turn away his ear from their entreaties and admonitions, under the plea that Christ is his leader. **And, on the other hand, the minister who submits his ministry to a superior, the bishop, the president, or one in authority in the church, to be sent out and directed in his ministry, cannot in the fullest sense, be Christ's ambassador.** Again we repeat the golden text: "One is your Master. even Christ; and all ye are brethren."

Between the two extremes we find the grand secret of unity and efficiency in the ministry and in the church of God. Our attention is called to this in a most solemn appeal from the venerable apostle Peter to the elders of his time. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind. Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the

flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

“Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty band of God, that lie may exalt you in due time.” 1 Pet. 5: 1-6.

When Christ's ministers sustain the relation to each other as exhorted in the foregoing, Christ, their glorious head and leader, will be with them in power, and lead them on in unity and in love.

In painful contrast with the foregoing are those ecclesiastical conferences and assemblies of our time, where ministers distinguish themselves by a spirit of strife and debate, and in the use of language which would be regarded as ungentlemanly, not to say unchristian, in all other respectable associations.

We affirm that there is not a single apology in all the book of God for disharmony of sentiment or spirit in the church of Christ. The means are ample to secure the high standard of unity expressed in these words of Paul: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Cor. 1:10. Again he appeals to the church at Rome: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 15:5, 6.

We can find no better words to close our remarks upon this subject than the triumphant appeal of the great apostle. Hear him, as he sets forth the proper condition of mind of the true disciple, and the oneness and efficiency of the ample means to secure the unity and perfection of the church of Christ.

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. 4:1-6.

The more definite means ordained in the church of God for her perfection and unity, should by no means be overlooked. Let the reader bear in mind that these were all given at the same time, for the same purpose, and all to cease at the same time. Have a part ceased? all have ceased. Do a portion continue? then all continue. Paul speaks of Christ's endowment of the church thus: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Verses 11-13.

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