

WHAT GOD SAID

There are within Scripture volumes of instructions that apply to the rearing of a family. The directions for the Godly father are well explained in Proverbs, Psalms, Deuteronomy, and throughout the New Testament. In particular, discipline (= *fatherly correction, backing up and adding to what a mother gives to the young, administering it himself to the older children*), and scriptural guidance are laid out in a precise manner. Equally, the pattern for the Godly wife is also very clear in Proverbs 31:15-ff, as well in the letters of Paul. It needs to be emphasized here that *by virtue of the Presence of the Most High, the Father Himself, being within the words of Scripture, He honors our obedience to those words found there*. Equally, He will not honor the words of anyone else. It does not matter how versed one is in the words of Dr. Spock, Dr. Brothers, or whatever icon is prominent at the time you are rearing your children.

If you are versed in what God said, and obedient to His precepts, He **will honor** His words by supernaturally blessing that obedience. He **will give** you Godly offspring, who behave accordingly. In other words, He **will bless** your fruit. By the same token, if you do not know or care to know what He said, much less follow it, then your fruit will go the way of the world. There are few dysfunctional children reared according to the Word with the proper administration of correction and then the reaffirming of value and love.

From my own experience, I can trace Godly behavior directly to my obedience to the Word; by the same token, I can trace ungodly behavior in my kids to where I as the father either disobeyed the known Word, or was ignorant of it.

Equally, I have observed first-hand the same in families whose fathers obeyed the Word as they understood it; their children were blessed accordingly, and became Godly offspring. Where the father and mother were in line with Scripture, the children behaved circumspectly. Where they did not, the children behaved in a “dysfunctional” manner, creating all sorts of havoc and distress.

The plan of God for mankind is:

1. Man was created by the Most High in His image to be:
 - a name (carry on with His character)
 - a praise (an admission of His goodness and greatness)
 - a glory (a public reflection of His grandeur)
2. That mankind should accept by faith the sacrifice of His Son, the Living Word.
3. That believing men should begin the process of becoming transformed (metamorphosed from their natural state to a completely different state) into the image of His Son, through the “eating” of the Word.
4. That in, from and by that process, husband and wife should not only reproduce themselves physically, mentally, but also spiritually.
5. That this family unit should be a representation of the one in Heaven, with the same unity, mutual respect and order.

6. That the order of the family be such as to enable, empower and protect its integrity and perpetuation.

Thus:

- the head (authority, leader) of every man is Christ.
- the head of a woman is her husband.
- the head of Christ is God.

Zodhiates: "...in the LORD man and woman are equal. In spite of this equality in Christ, in creation and in the present order of things the husband is the head of the family. He is stronger in order to protect the woman. He ought to recognize his position and show it overtly. She ought to recognize her protector and abide under his care. God is responsible for the difference in the make-up of male and female, and no man should at any time endeavor in any way to diminish between the two, in physical or emotional constitution, appearance or function in life."¹

So what *is* the opposite of being blessed, fruitful, happy, content and fulfilling our purpose?

Imagine if you will an army which consists of members who are trained in different aspects of warfare, and which is structured in such a way as to maximize productivity. That structure establishes foremost, order; order is reflected by unity; unity allows the army to produce its intended purpose, which is to defend and protect its own, and to destroy the enemy. Order, unity and productivity are perpetuated by obedience.

Continue imagining an army in which there is no authority, no order, and disobedience at every level. The result will be disorder and competition, leading to chaos, division and conflict. Conflict in turn leads to pain, loss, and ruin; defeat, humiliation and death are the end-game products. **BREAKDOWN** Sound familiar?

The private, lieutenant, captain, colonel, general and chief of staff of an army are sequentially accountable to the Commander-in-Chief. The disobedience/omission of any one of the levels of command destroys, prevents, and perverts the purpose of the Commander-in-Chief. Sound familiar?

The chain of command of an army fulfills the same function as does the chain of command between the Father, Jesus, the husband, and the wife. Order begets unity, which in turn begets success. Sound *un*familiar?

So if our families are dysfunctional and unsuccessful, in disarray, conflict, pain, loss and ruin, to what may we logically attribute these? Is the answer nor self-evident? Certainly we cannot accuse Jesus of disobedience, nor the Commander-in-Chief of error! Is Jesus in disharmony with his Father? Is there bedlam in heaven? Surely not!

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The Perversion of Proper Headship is further divided into five subheadings:

Absence of the Fear of the LORD

Contempt of the Word of God

Man-made Institutions Substituted for the Headship of Christ

Ignorance of the Male's Responsibilities

Falling for the Deception of the Enemy

Absence of the Fear of the LORD

“The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom,” is a phrase which is older than the Golden Rule, used in the book of Job. It is repeated in Proverbs several times, as well as in the Psalms. *Fear* means awe, reverence, a most high respect, the motive behind a most careful behavior; *wisdom* means know-how, cunning, savvy in all secular affairs, etc. Godly wisdom is associated with success, the success and Godly behavior of our families being no exception. When the scriptures say, *beginning*, it means just that, the beginning. The Word defines *beginning* as being the Fear of God (reverence, awe, respect, *not* terror).

This awe, respect, and reverence is inculcated, emplaced and trained into a child by the *father* during the formative years. The training is commensurate with the age of the child, male or female, and is not violent, cruel or mean in any way. To the contrary, the child feels very secure in knowing where his or her boundaries are, and who he or she is in the LORD. A male learns who he is and is to be, from and through his earthly father, and later this respect is granted to his wife, and further extended to his Father in Heaven. Equally, the female learns proper respect and perspective for her heavenly Father from and through her respect for her earthly father, and thence to her husband to be. It is a proven fact that we perceive our Father in heaven to be much the same in manner and character as our earthly father (or the dominant adult) in our formative years.

Where the father abdicates his responsibility in the training of his children as above, training takes place nonetheless, but in the negative. The male child sees and imitates implicit carelessness, contempt, disrespect and disregard for God and for all that He represents. In short, he *learns* these, and winds up behaving as such in his adult life. Such a male child becomes a father untrained in rearing his own children. His relationship with his wife is either arrogant, abusive, contemptuous, indecisive, or in some combination of these. In other words, he becomes either a weenie or a brute.

Contempt of the Word of God

The Hebrew word for “contemn” is *na’ats*, which means to revile, despise, reject, condemn, deride, or scorn. It carries the idea of disdain for one who formerly received favorable attention and then rebelled. As in most verbs, there is an active and intentional tense, as well as an indirect. It resembles acts of commission as well as acts of omission. In other words, one can contemn something by omission as well as by commission.

As we have seen in other places, it is the heart that God reads, not our overt actions. So it is with contemning the Word of God. We can do so by merely placing our efforts in another direction, or by desiring something in its place. Thus a TV show or a game can qualify us into the category of contemning the Word of God.

As it is said, lip service is cheap; here it is also very dangerous.

Man-made Institutions Substituted for the Headship of Christ.

Institutions do not crop up overnight, nor do they develop into their final size and influence at one fell swoop. Instead, there is an incipient phase which is all too telling as at the core, and an evolution to their history that bends them into an entity that more often than not is evil. The evil that either was embryonic or simply evolutionary is nearly always cloaked in sheep’s clothing. Regardless of size, scope or influence, small groups, denominations, fraternities, companies, states and even nations exhibit similar internal as well as external characteristics.

Let us list several disparate expressions of man’s activities:

- the *physical* field, such as stonemasons, truck drivers, grouse hunters, equestrians, seamstresses, knife makers, swimmers, soccer players.
- the *mental* field, such as piano playing, art, music, writing, philosophy.
- the *spiritual* arena, such as Deity, Heaven and Hell, witchcraft, levitation, cults, denominations, ESP, etc.
- the *economic* field, with companies organized for the purpose of making money, and having a tax structure..
- the *political* field; arenas of power and influence.

Using stonemasons in England as an example, imagine the beginnings of the trade. Out of the core of some individual’s being, he decides to excel at laying stones with mortar, and in time achieves a high level of excellence. His sons, or neighbors, taking notice of his excellence, as well as the approbation of those around him towards his high standard of laying stones, wish to imitate him.

Now at this point we have a group of people with the same mindset, the assembling of people with the same agenda, as it were, of perpetuating a standard of excellence in the trade of a stonemason. At this point the group is unorganized, but they have a spirit of unity in the upholding of a standard common to all. At this juncture of the group, there is no separation, no hierarchy between any individual and the rest. All are equal in the sense of having a unified direction of establishing high quality stonemasonry as their objective. In other words, *their focus, and thus allegiance, is to their ideal and vision.*

But! -now we have from the public's eye, an *image*.

It is this "image" that will be the motivation for subsequent changes and operations.

It is this "image" that takes on a life of its own, and by virtue of a life, a certain spirit. Initially, this spirit of the group, originating out of its founder, is usually of high quality, character, and essence, but nonetheless benign. This "image" of excellence and the commensurate public approbation is what draws evil; evil is always seeking a cover for its insidious behavior. It is the unwariness and simplemindedness of men of quality that allows evil to insinuate itself into their everyday operations.

Inevitably one of the band of stonemasons (usually the one with most charisma, education, or maybe just a higher level of respect from the rest of the men), suggests their group come up with a name for the group. A "Name"! -how incredibly subtle and innocuous! -how innocent, and undeserving of any suspicion of being a wrong direction!

Nonetheless, this "name" signifies volumes. This "name" has an incredible power associated with it, and alters the very basis, the very core reason of being for the group of stonemasons. *This "name" takes on a life of its own from the very moment of conception.*

Once a "name" is applied, several things happen:

1. A "name" connotes distinction.
2. Distinction inaugurates elevation.
3. Elevation implies a division between one element of the group and others.
4. This division requires a hierarchy, a leader and a minority.
5. A leader necessitates followers, a majority.
6. Followers must by definition fall under, support, defend, and be subservient to leaders.
7. Instead of several men united with a common goal and purpose, they are an entity which is now divided, structured, and organized.

Therefore we have, simply because the group took on a "name," something completely different than what was originally intended by the quality-seeking stonemasons. Now we have Freemasonry et al occult and cults formed under the same premises. Good becomes evil due to the affections and deceit of man.

The pattern of groups, from the acquiring of a name to their zenith, is basically common to most, if not all, of the above list of man's activities. What is astounding is the observation that even when a group begins from a *physical* standpoint, it often acquires a *spiritual expression* from the moment it acquires a name and an organization.

For those groups that metamorphose into a *malignant* spiritual expression, the evolution is usually as follows:

- an interest, a bent, an expression, a movement, a vision, acquires a name.
- a name begets distinction.
- distinction begets an organization.
- an organization begets a leader, or leaders.
- leaders beget an authority structure. Elevation begets division.
- an authority structure begets order, rules, the elevation of some, and the diminution of others, usually based on levels of charisma, education or looks.
- ***the founder(s) of the group, and thus the original vision, dies.*** As a rule of thumb, the original vision of the founder (and his disciples) usually mutates and disappears when those privy to the original vision die. Jesus' true Christianity is no exception.
- division begets authority.
- authority begets power.
- power begets corruption.
- corruption begets domination.
- domination begets the maintaining of power at all costs.
- the maintaining of power begets the establishment of a publicly approved ***Image***; defense of practices and party mantras increase, and there is an attempt to hide and cover anything that makes the Group look bad in the public eye, and anything that erodes the power of its ***image***.
- the group seeks to maintain their Image of Light, Excellence and Quality even to the point of retroactively projecting this Image backwards in time. This backwards projection contains elements that were missing in the minds of the founders, and to points in time far older than the original.

Regardless of size or influence, ***every group, every man-made institution acquires a spiritual bent, a familiar spirit, a party spirit.***

Once a member joins a social/religious group, he/she senses he/she is part of something "elite," whether that is voiced or not. There is a sense of acceptance, of belonging, of being a part of something larger than themselves. To most members, that is the comforting fact. This "eliteness," or being set apart and insulated, occurs whether it be a religious or a secret (or open) fraternal organization, sect, philanthropic group, financial consortium, motorcycle club, musical/art society or even a profession. The dangers are from those in the spiritual realm.

Once a person “joins” (a social/religious group), he immediately receives praise, acceptance and the welcome mat from those already there, because you have essentially vouchsafed their own membership. This acceptance is what most people are seeking.

Basically, the hierarchies of social/religious groups present to potential members the elements that appeal to their flesh, and to their soulish wants and deficiencies. The controllers of such hierarchies know very well what buttons to push that will titillate the gullible, the unsuspecting and the simple. Good works and asceticism are the primary buttons. Accomplishment “ladders” are another; some even react to flags, pomp, buildings, mammoth video screens, sounds, colors, manuals, structure, or even flattery. Most social/religious groups put out a mantra which, when repeated often enough, becomes systemic. ***These in turn become traditions.*** These mantra have just enough truth in them to sound convincing. This latter element is exactly why most groups, particularly religious ones, do not want you to know very much more than what they tell you. If you stay ignorant, you are much easier to manage and control. Just nod and listen.

On the low end of the scale, Hare Krishna is well-known for its expertise in recognizing a runaway teenager, one who is wounded by her family. They know very well how to draw them in by rapt attention and feigned “love.” Sugar-laden cookies are then used to weaken their analytical defense mechanisms.

There is little difference between the Hare Krishna tactic and those of other man-made institutions, only in variety and degree of eloquence. Indeed, for every expression of the soul there is a tailor-made group structured, manicured, and choreographed to perfection in order to garner members who will serve and strengthen the hierarchy well with their time, money, prestige and influence. Why do you think Paul warned of the Enemy “roaming the earth seeking whom he may devour?”

This sense of worth, deference or superiority, whether artificial or not, solidifies into a largely unperceived party spirit; the member literally and spiritually comes under the spiritual dominance of the ***spell*** of the party spirit. Once there, logic, facts, reasoning and other elements of the soul realm will not dislodge the deceit nor reach the roots of evil.

What began as physical and superficial, metamorphoses into that which is spiritual. That’s why you cannot convince one who is deceived otherwise, even though the person’s deception and impending ruin is as plain as day to you. There is a spell over them preventing them from hearing. At an advanced stage, they really ***cannot*** hear.

Human nature is very predictable, a fact well known by the controllers of the hierarchies of large groups. ***The “image” presented by the group overwhelms prudence and due diligence normally present in making a decision.*** The image presented them is designed to draw them into membership no less than red color, shine and power scenes are designed to get you to buy a new truck. Once “in,” the rank-and-file majority, being “good” people, actually perpetuate the “image.” Incredibly, the rank-and-file defend the “image” with vehemence, even anger when challenged by an outsider. Why? –Because that’s what they want!

The longer one stays inside, the more entrenched the defense, and the more deceived the mind. If one thinks about it, once we have joined, to *un*-join would mean humiliation and the admission of stupidity. So, one does not *un*-join. It is much easier to maintain the *status quo*. Nearly all social fraternities, most civil fraternal organizations and some Christian denominations *have no provision* to allow a member to sever membership. You cannot get *out*. Ask around if you doubt this. Baptists and Freemasons are but two primary examples.

There is also a reluctance to realize once a member “joins,” that he/she comes under the authority of that group’s hierarchy, whether there is an official announcement or not. He is tacitly submitting himself to their direction. The “benefits” of the group are accentuated as the hook. The unperceived danger is that the member not only participates in the “benefits” but will also participate in its sins, and the resultant judgments. (See II John 9-11)

If you support in any way, mentally, physically, financially, or merely by condoning, attendance and/or association, the same reaping applies to any member of a group whose hierarchy usurps or supplants the Headship of Jesus. The Bible is very clear on this subject.

Falling for the Deception of the Enemy

The Devices and Deceptions of the Enemy

1. To substitute disrespect, carelessness, and arrogance for the Fear of the LORD.
2. To substitute fleshly attributes and customs for the Word of God.
3. To substitute emotion for discernment and understanding.
4. To substitute entertainment for the Presence and Guidance of the Holy Spirit.
5. To substitute acceptance, avoidance of confrontation, and tough choices for obedience.

The Deadly Substitution

The vast majority of scriptural evidence supports our blood as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. As is seen in *From Meat to Blood*, nearly all the food we eat begins and ends with violence, from the severing of a cabbage head from its mother plant, to the electric shock killing of a beef steer. From beginning to end, the food we eat undergoes progressive breakdown from a knife to mastication to finally a size where bacteria can dissolve the food molecularly. Nonetheless, irrespective of the breakdown of the food, it never touches the blood. Instead, the *essence* of the food is transferred through the intestinal walls thence into our blood stream. From there this essence becomes *life* and the blood transfers it to our cells, where they are replenished and given food.

Such it is with the eating, gnawing, and chewing of Scripture. “Christian” cultish thought of every conceivable variation and theme focuses on those elements connected with the Bible such as the paper and book itself. Phrases, words, interpretations of those words, and opinions mostly originate out of the minds of men. These in turn, through tradition, are made nearly as important as the Gospel itself. I know of few groups or denominations which do not have some man-made focus central to their denomination *other than the Presence of God Himself*.

Fill in the blanks of such places you may know:

Sounds, sights, and sensual effects appealing to the emotions of man

- music and “worship” over the meat of the Word
- entertainment over enlightenment

Regulation, methods, rules that appeal to the mind of man

- quiet, stoic, staid, politeness, decorum, propriety
- days and weeks of “fasting” verses true piety of heart
- diet
- tradition over Scripture
- Old Testament emphasis over the New
- New Testament to the exclusion of the Old
- works in all its myriad forms, from burn hospitals, to missions, to feeding the poor, to fraternal bliss.
- “fellowship,” the “assembling”, etc.

Whatever draws people into the door of the place of “assembly.”

Webster’s dictionary defines a “cult” as;

- “a particular system of religious worship, with reference to its rites and ceremonies.”

The point being made here is that anything that precludes, supplants, delays, or obstructs the child of God from encountering Him and His *essence* is cultish at the very least, and idolatrous at worst.

This *essence* is unquestionably within the spirit realm; therefore, it cannot be garnered, acquired, nor absorbed by those things of the soulish realm. Glib tongues, impersonators, and manipulators equally try to make Scripture nearly everything that it is not, from a science manual (a “6000-year old earth”) to a diet regimen. It is axiomatic in this last phase of American culture we are being inundated by those leaders, speakers and “shepherds” that entice us with their glib tongues, slick packaging, and soulish doctrines. What is so hellish is the vast majority of these “leaders” and “shepherds” are clueless as to their participation in this, and for the most part, have no malevolent intent. They simply are following their soulish bents and traditions of their fathers.

Just as the food chyme in our intestines is not the essence that eventually “feeds” us, *so all these trappings associated with traditions, doctrines, creeds, regimentation, rules, and “worship” forms are not the essence of God’s being that “feeds” our spirits.*

When Jesus admonished us to “chew and gnaw” His words, it was with the same process in mind that affects our physical bodies. Namely, by “gnawing and chewing” His Word, the Spirit transfers its essence to our spirits. As we deeply desire what there is of God within scripture, the Holy Spirit extracts the essence of the Word from it and puts it in our spiritual veins as it were. Thence it no longer the *logos*, but now has become a *rhema*. That’s why dogmatic adherence to certain translations, creeds, works, doctrines, traditions and the like have never been, and will never be, the true essence of God!

Jesus was the Logos (= Word, the life, the spirit, the essence) long before any word was printed, whether on papyrus, paper or the www. It is the life of the Word, Jesus Himself, that is the essence of the Word, not the book itself; much less any traditions, creeds, doctrines and worship forms that might crop up from generation to generation.

One touch from the Father, if lasting only a second or two, makes every thought, every tradition, every work, every concept of man pale in comparison. It is this relationship for which the Bible was inspired in the first place. The Bible, being inspired by the Spirit of God, has as its essence, ***THE*** life of God Himself. For all the mutations of the Bible by evil translators and copiers, some unintentional, these errors are not what cause man to pervert the Word of God. Indeed, whether a typographical or translational error makes no difference at all as to the life and essence that is within its pages. It makes no difference if some parts of the inspired message are missing; what matters is that the essence, the Life is absorbed into our spirits by the Holy Spirit’s moving.

This paper is not at issue with those groups and institutions that are largely benign in a spiritual sense, such as support groups and biking clubs. The issue is with those groups, denominations and quasi-religions that tack on Jesus’ name to their man-made institutions, man-made doctrines and man-made practices.

The Nicolaitans

Revelation 2:1, 6: (Jesus is speaking) “Unto the angel of the *ekklesia* (“called out ones”) of Ephesus, write:....But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

2:12, 14-16 “Unto the angel of the *ekklesia* of Pergamos write: ‘...you have some there who hold the teaching of *Balaam* ...that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality... So you also have those there who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Repent then.’”

Now there is something here of incredible importance. First of all, though the word *ekklesia* (translated “church”) is misleading, even there the word “church” is not capitalized. Thus the *ekklesia* is not a name, nor an institution by any means. It is a word that describes the spiritual members of Christ, members of His body. We believers are the “called out ones.”

Webster (1828), Dake, and *Unger's Bible Dictionary* define the Nicolaitans as a sect within the early Christian church that “espoused eating food offered to idols, and held the women should be common to all the men, thus promoting adultery and lasciviousness.”² There is a break in Scripture between the teaching of Balaam offering food to idols and practicing immorality (‘immorality’ here meaning having wives in common) and the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Offering food to idols and the practice of immorality clearly is applied to that of Balaam, not the Nicolaitans. The *also* signifies another charge and issue, not the one of immorality in the preceding sentence. “Also” means in addition to, besides.

The net effect of this deflection is that we read this absurdity and allocate the (misinterpreted) practice to something of olden days, not in the least applicable to our times. In other words, it is so far out, it isn't even remotely connected to our practices. This is disinformation, plain and simple, intended to cloak the real meaning of the evil spirit of the Nicolaitans, which is the vertical separation between the clergy and the laity.

The name Nicolaitans is a combination of two smaller words, “nico” and “laitans.” “Nico” comes from the Greek word, *nike*, which means *victory*. The verb form is *nikao*, to conquer, to overcome, to prevail. The synonyms in Roget's Thesaurus for victory are:

- advantage over
- edge
- ascendancy
- mastery
- subjugation

“Laitans” comes from *laos*, which means *people*.

Combining the two, we have “victory over the people,” or “ascendancy over the people.”

So why then, does Jesus hate the Nicolaitans? And why does He say the same thing about them twice? Twice in the scriptures signifies taking notice, an emphasis on a thing.

This thing that Jesus hated and still hates, is this victory, this dominance, this distinction of one person over another within the Body of His people. Other parts of Scripture back this up; “There is no distinction between male and female, Greek nor barbarian.” In other words, the members of Jesus' Body are horizontal to one another.

Two scriptures highlight this principle; one is from Paul in II Corinthians 1:24, “Not that we lord it over your faith.” Another version is, “That I should not have dominion over your faith.” In other words, Paul considered himself an apostle of Jesus, not an apostle over the believers. He considered himself horizontal with the believers at Corinth.

A second scripture is from I Peter 5:1-4. “So I (Peter) exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder....tend the flock that is your charge...not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge, but as examples.”

Both the above passages contain “have dominion” or “domineering.” The Greek word is *kurieuo* in the first, and a strengthened form, *katakurieuo*, in the latter. Both mean to exercise lordship over, rule over, have dominion over. Both signify one over the other, a vertical relationship instead of horizontal. Only Jesus is to be in the vertical position.

Only the pagan altars were elevated, the ones with a platform. God’s altars were level with the ground. Whether we like it or not, the prevailing mode of “preaching” is from an elevated platform. The “preacher” is physically above the laity. His physical position, “clerical” differences in dress, and “calling” differentiate him from the laity. Moreover, from such an elevated position, the laity, all facing the same direction, are in no position to respond to anything he says. He has the microphone, the elevation, the attention, the control of the service. It starts when he says, it finishes when he says, all choreographed beforehand. Moreover, little happens in that service without him approving. In the members’ minds, the “clergy” is a notch above them. He is special, trained, educated, to be respected, followed, elevated, and treated differently than one of the laity. This has nothing to do with his intentions, nor his character, nor his motives; it has to do with the net effect: Under this scenario, Jesus is not the center of attention, nor the director.

The other significant thing about this passage is that it was written around 70 A.D. At this early date the Enemy was attempting to segregate, to divide, and to usurp the Headship of Jesus from His people. This apostate trend continued throughout the first century and increased in strength in the second century. By the third century, Augustine’s teaching caught fire with Constantine, who made the *ekklesia* ***the*** Church, with all its hierarchy, structure and division of authority. The rest is traditional history, whether *Catholic* or *Protestant* ‘Churches.’ There used to be a distinction between the Catholic and the Protestant, punctuated by blood and agony. Today, there is little if any distinction, other than cosmetic.

The Word is clear (to those who want to hear) about the family being the unit that is to reproduce and bear the LORD Godly seed. It is also very clear as to the relationship between God and Jesus, between Jesus and the man, and between the man and the wife, and between elders and the members of the Body.

There were never any buildings, groups, names, authority structures nor distinctions in the New Testament *ekklesia until the second century*. Jesus was the Head and interacted directly with the members of His Body by the Holy Spirit.

One wonders a second time why Jesus hates the Nicolaitans. As is the case in all of scripture, there are multiple levels of understanding to the passages in The Revelation. One of the superficial reasons is, of course, the meaning of the word itself, meaning victory, or dominance over the people.

But another (perhaps the primary) reason is that His hate for the Nicolaitans was the implicit dominance of one man over another which eliminated, or at least attenuated the sensitive relationship between the believer and the True Shepherd. It is impossible to construe the elevated position of the modern-day “pastor” any other way.

By virtue of any man's physical (and by extension spiritual) position elevated above the sheep, he becomes an object of attention. Say what you will, this attention and distinction did, does and will evolve into a sense of power. Power in turn did, does, and will want to increase and continue. In other words, power corrupts. Few men can escape the guiles of power.

Priests as well as Protestant "pastors" have been trained to keep their pulpits free from the layman for three primary reasons; *the first is to maintain control, and the other two are to keep the "pastor" from looking bad.* If the layman is crude or unprepared, his off-the-wall ravings will make the "pastor" look foolish and careless of his position and responsibilities. Equally, if the layman is for some reason more spirit-filled than he, and his words more anointed than those of the "pastor," the pastor will again be placed in an unfavorable light. This training to keep the pulpit *pure* comes from seminary training, his peers, and tradition. Rarely is the layman allowed to speak, except for perfunctory occasions, and the annual "layman's day." To play the negative advocate, it is ludicrous to think *one man* can be the entire Body of Christ every Sunday, and fulfill the spiritual needs of every layman present at the meeting. There is no way one man can have all the words of Jesus for every person every Sunday.

So Sunday after Sunday, he stands between the sheep and Jesus, literally, mentally, and metaphorically. The life-giving flow between Jesus and His sheep is interrupted, and a surrogate, a usurper, a substitute, stands in His place, irrespective of the "pastor's" motives. All of God's promises are conditional, and directly proportional to obedience to those conditions. A man's intents and motives, however pure, honorable and accepted are not what God honors; He honors obedience to His Word, and only His Word. Does one need to remind the believer how easily they can be deceived? Hate? – the Greek word translated into in English is far too soft. Detest? Abhor? –better, but still watered down compared to the intense feelings spoken in The Revelation.

I was in a small gathering in central Arkansas recently. It was a typical mid-America Protestant "church." The building was fairly new, small by America's mega-church standards, but capable of housing 150-200 people. The obligatory satellite rooms accommodated Sunday School, etc. The people trickled in before the appointed hour, exchanged pleasantries, and eventually sat in their customary side of the sanctuary in their more or less customary pew. On the hour, there was a call to order, followed by labored effort to sing along with the music leader. The songs were unfamiliar, and virtually impossible for the novice to master. The strain permeated the entire meeting hall. (The Emperor had no clothes, but the show must go on...) After two or three of these aborted efforts to "sing," the people sat down on cue to endure the program. All faced forward, silent, almost in a trance, dutifully obeying the MC.

Click, click, click went the spiritual metronome. "Sit down, stand up, sit down, listen, nod, listen, be quiet, nod, put your money in the till, and be quiet until we say you are through 'participating;' then you may go home. You can fellowship between the building and the parking lot. Tell your children they are to follow the same rules of the 'sanctuary,' and to adhere to the same pattern effective for five hundred years.

Your kids may go to the bathroom as many times as they wish, under whatever pretense, so long as they remain quiet, and learn to go along with the program. Face me, for I know more than you, I know what you need better than yourself. Listen to me, while I orate for a half-hour what I learned in seminary. I will mention Jesus, even Jesus Christ, at least 20 times during my oration to punctuate the appearance of being holy. You do not need to remember more than 10-15 words that are said, only those that will more or less validate that you have been to 'church.' This building represents 500 years of tradition as well as the vision of our particular founders. With all its warmth, pennants, flags and other spiritual trappings we intend to evoke symbolism instead of substance, visuals for vitality, form for function, and looks instead of life. Hallelujah!"

All the while, all the while, Jesus cannot get a word in edgewise. All the space and time are allocated. No part of His body is allowed to function except the mouth, and that part being an impersonator, a usurper, a presumptuous actor.

Show time !!

"ENOUGH!" –you say. "You are nothing more than a bitter old man, cursing the darkness. We are *good* people." Yes, you are, in the world's eyes. Not a flaw, not a speck, no runs, no drips, no errors. Argue with Jesus, if you will, I'm only a messenger.

At least the noun you use is correct. I am a man.

The adjectives you use are incorrect.

I am not old; but then again I am not young.

I am not bitter; the source and root behind the words above stems from a sense of loss and ruin. More precisely, a sense of His sheep being led into a pen of wolves, trained and conditioned to be dull of mind, inert of spiritual discernment, and complacent as to the urgency, seriousness and terror of the hour.

My position is indeed tragic. I am impaled on the razor wire and stakes between the inner court of the fort and the darkness outside, where I both hear and sense approaching hoof-beats. Inside, the artificial light gives the false impression that all is well. Have some coffee and some cake or stay after the service to enjoy our potluck...

My screaming is politically and emotionally out of sync with the sheep inside ("this is *our* church, you know"). My words are contemned by sneers by the spiritual Huns approaching from the north. Neither side cares; yet, yet, yet! –the Lover of our souls, the Most High, the Dread Warrior does care.

Since the First Advent, He has lamented over the sheep in “Jerusalem.”

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who were sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.” Matthew 23:37-39

The motions of the carousel upon which we ride are varied enough to give the impression we are doing something. In reality the up and down motions disguise our ultimate path of going nowhere, only around and around. The distance around the carousel is long enough to deceive the child; the different colors and trappings of the horses contribute to that effect. As Shakespeare said, “Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”³

Einstein mused, “The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and over, expecting a different result.”

Back to the carousel; if one, who from a perspective of some distance from the carousel (read age, experience) were to say to the child, “You’re not going anywhere,” the child would resent your truth. He/she would respond in tears because you burst their bubble, anger because you exposed their waste of time, crushed because they thought they were doing something. So it is today when one “criticizes” another’s traditions.

Back to the tragic figure impaled on the stakes and razor wire; his view from the wall is tormenting. As the occupants within the compound rotate his way from time to time, he tries to get their attention. The old pay him no mind. Their hearts and minds are as so much old leather, hardened over the years by repetitions of fruitless and worn-out traditions. The “leaders” are afraid to listen, let alone heed.

They are afraid of losing control, and their stature in front of the people; thus their resistance to warnings without readily apparent facts. They are trained to not listen to the ramblings of the “wild man” on the wall, nor to entertain anything that does not adhere to the party line or is counter to the prescribed mantra.

Occasionally he can garner the attention of the young. But his message to the young is a bit harsh, and upsetting to their rose-colored plans. His warnings are anathema to their idealism, optimism, and happiness. As such, the figure remains tragic; alas, his warnings are respected by the occasional youth, but difficult to follow.

The child on the carousel desires to be happy...

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew-Greek Study Bible* (AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1985) p. 1399 notes.

² Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois, 1988) p. 921

³ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Act 5, Scene5)