

THE NICOLAITANS

By J. H. Allen (author of Judah's Scepter and Joseph's Birthright, published 1902)

When our Lord Jesus Christ walked among men, He taught His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, whom He denounced as hypocrites. With them He classed the chief priests and officials of the temple, together with the recognized teachers, (scribes, or "professors" Ferrar Fenton Translation) in the Synagogues. He declared they had so corrupted the truth of God, which they were supposed to preach, with the doctrines and ordinances of men, that the truth, as originally given, was no longer with them. That which these blind leaders of the blind were given forth as truth of God was making their converts twofold more the children of hell than they were before accepting the [schi]ism by these corrupt teachers.

Therefore, as a warning to those who were joining themselves to Him, the Lord said that these non-spiritual men made long prayers for a "pretense," a public "show" which, while having a form of humility, was for the purpose only of being seen of men. What these men really loved were the highest seats in the Synagogues; the uppermost rooms at the public feasts; the greetings they received in the market places from truly humble and sincere men, whom they hoped would esteem them as superiors, and who addressed them as Rabbi, Rabbi, my master, my master. But our Lord commanded:

"Be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren....Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant," (Matthew 23:8-11).

This was a double command for a double purpose: 1) Do not allow men who are your brethren in Christ, and who compose the assembly of God, to call you Master, for One alone is your Master. 2) Do not allow yourself to become possessed with such a carnal spirit that you want men who belong to the body of Christ to call you "Master."

Also, added to the carnal desire to be "uppermost" in the eyes of the Lord's people, these leaders were charged with extortion and accused of devouring the homes of widows, and of excess. Jesus accused them of being hypocrites who aspired to be regarded as dignitaries of the congregations of the Most High God. Such conditions as described exist only in the assemblies across whose ethical portals, before the God of Holiness, has been written the name, "Ichabod" -- the glory of the Lord has departed.

The word "excess," as used above, means the carnal abuse of lawful things; things lawful and right carried to extremes. For it is true that there is a legal and God approved honor given to certain selected ones:

"We beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves," (I Timothy 5:17).

Why guide and lead, instead of rule? Because those who are over us in the Lord are shepherds who must lead and guide, but not dominate. Rule is arbitrary government, and the Church may

be "subject to Christ" only. *"One is your Master, even Christ."* The following Divine instruction is from one of the Spirit-filled elders:

"The elders which are among you 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 [not rulership] 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," (I Peter 5:1-3).

The "blind guides" would say, but not do. The Divinely-anointed elder will both say and do, and thus be an example to the flock, whom the people will love and esteem very highly for his work's sake, and who in his heart will never desire to be lord over the heritage of his Master. It is this aspiration on the part of men to become lords over God's heritage that God hates. "The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" is just what the word Nicolaitanes itself declares.

Proof:

1) In the book of the revelation of Jesus Christ, it is both "the deeds" and "the doctrine" of those in the two "churches" specified (Revelation 2:6, 15). The Lord demands repentance on the part of those who hold and practice these things and He threatens drastic punishment if they do not obey Him:

The evidence of this is found in all our common school dictionaries, among which we find the following definition of the term "hierarchy: the power of dominion, government by ecclesiastical rulers," to which the following is introduced in evidence:

"If anyone shall say that there is not in the Catholic Church a hierarchy established by the divine ordination, consisting of bishops, prebyters and ministers, let him be anathema, Council of Trent (trans) XXIII 6." (Century Dictionary.)

In other words, let anyone who will have the temerity to say there is not a hierarchy, not a collection of human beings, who have been given the power, by other men of dominion, as ecclesiastical rulers over churchmen, who are declaredly God's heritage, let that man be accursed; i.e., let death and hell and the devil get him. Surely, the thing in which that ecclesiastical company is glorying is their shame!

Furthermore, Webster defines the word "episcopal" as "the power of government, belonging to, or invested in, bishops or prelates. Government of the church by bishops." Also "In episcopacy, the order of bishops is superior to the other clergy, and has exclusive power to confer orders." In this definition it is affirmed that a certain portion of presbyters (elders) were even "in apostolic times superior in authority to ordinary presbyters," and also mentions the fact that episcopacy recognizes "episcopal rank" which is created by the institution thus governed; all of which affirms that any church in which episcopal government obtains is practicing the very carnal and fleshly iniquity of creating "Superiors" in what should be a holy brotherhood. The use of this appellation makes "inferiors" out of "brethren" who are in the selfsame clergy. The approbation of "ordinary elders" demands a "set" of elders who are superordinary, thus creating

"rank" (caste) in the otherwise Divine brotherhood, all of which destroys holy fellowship, creates division and strife, and fosters envy. No marvel that our Lord should hate a thing like that, condemn it, and demand that those who are guilty shall repent. But will they? Yes, some will when the tribulation is on. Others, however, will stick to their ecclesiastical crowd, vainly imagining that their boasted "superiority" will carry them through that time of the greatest trouble the world has ever known, or will know. They must go down with the rest of the hosts of anti-Christ.

And yet, one of the most unfortunate features of all this is that there are those in the Christian Church who do not hold to the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, but who practice "their deeds" of dominating the laity by lording it over the Church of Jesus Christ, which should be subject only to one Divine Master. It is often true that these have assumed this lordship because they are esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake, but have become vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind. Beloved, "***Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.***"

Christ's attitude toward service is to be our attitude -- everyone in his fellowship: Mat 20:25-28 *But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his live a ransom for many.*

Notice how the Father exalted this greatest of all Servants:

Phil 2:4-11 *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

By contrast, who was the first despot? Satan the Devil. He was created to serve as the prodigy of Jehovah 2 -- to serve like the pre-incarnate Christ will, see Isa 11:1+, etc. Isa 14:12-19 *How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 14:13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascent into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14:14 I will ascent above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high. 14:15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. 14:16 They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; 14:17 That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? 14:18 All the kings of the nations, even all of them, lie in glory, every one in his own house. 14:19 But thou art cast*

out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcass trodden under feet.

Note how the process took place -- the motive that developed and the "MO" Satan used: Ezek 28:14-19 *Thou art the anointed cherub that COVERETH; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God [government]; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire [morning stars]. 28:15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 28:16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 28:17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings that they may behold thee. 28:18 Thou HAST DEFILED THY SANCTUARIES BY THE MULTITUDE OF THEIR INIQUITIES, by the iniquity of thy traffic; therefore will I bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. 28:19 All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.*

The Father and Christ are God, and thus our Superiors, we are ALL brethren, see MT 23:8-11, again. Also, each saint is a Spirit filled "priest" of God, see 1 Pet 2:9-10 *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: 2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God...2Col 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him....+ Eph 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*