

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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"Who Made You...A Judge Over Us?"

When faced with the unpleasant but necessary task of correcting another's error, the common retort is "Who made you the judge?" or some slight variation on that theme: "Don't judge me!" or "Why are you so judgmental?" Such efforts to deflect criticism aren't new at all.

Thirty-four centuries ago, Moses was observing his countrymen in Egypt when he witnessed an assault. Confronting the aggressor, he asked, "*Why are you striking your companion?*", only to be rebuffed with the words: "*Who made you a prince and a judge over us?*" (Exodus 2:13- 14).

Hundreds of years earlier, Abraham's nephew Lot was dwelling in the city of Sodom when his homosexual neighbors attempted to assault his houseguests. Lot implored them, "*Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly!*" (Genesis

19:6), following which they remarked, "*This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge*" (Genesis 19:9).

It should come as no surprise that the same tactic is employed by sinners today. People just don't like to be told they're wrong.

Exercising judgment is an essential element of godly behavior. Jesus did not forbid judging; He just taught how it is to be done: "*Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment*" (John 7:24). Indeed, it is a defining characteristic of spiritual maturity that one is able "*to discern both good and evil*" (Hebrews 5:14).

Paul commented, "*Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?*" (1st Corinthians 6:2). Scripture teaches that Noah "*condemned the world*" when he prepared the ark to save his household from the flood (Hebrews 11:7), and Jesus said, "*The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here*" (Matthew 12:41). Whenever one does right, he implicitly condemns those who err.

- Bryan Matthew Dockens

Apostolic Succession

The doctrine of apostolic succession is, broadly speaking, the idea that all the apostles of Christ were to have men succeed them in their office down through the centuries.

Some religious bodies claim succession, not by an unbroken chain reaching back to the first century, but by a restoration of the apostleship based on special revelation. The Latter Day Saints (Utah), the Reorganized Church (Missouri), and the Church of Christ (Temple Lot) claim that their "apostles" are the true successors to

the apostolic office, yet each disputes the claim made by the others. Such groups as Roman Catholics, Orthodox Churches, and Anglicans maintain that their "bishops" are the true successors to the apostolic office. Obviously, someone is wrong.

The word "apostle" (apostolos in Greek) occurs 79 times in the New Testament. It means "a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders" (Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon, p. 68). It applies to "One sent as a messenger or agent, the bearer of a commission (Analytical Greek Lexicon, p. 47). In John 13: 16 the word is translated, "he that is sent."

The New Testament speaks of "apostles" in at least three different senses:

(1) Of God. Jesus was sent into the world by the Father (John 17:18), therefore is referred to as "the Apostle" of our profession (Heb. 3: 1). Just as Moses was commissioned of God to lead the nation of Israel, Jesus was sent into the world to save the lost.

(2) Of Christ. The twelve were chosen and sent forth by Jesus Christ (Matt. 10: 1, 5) In the selection of Matthias, the Lord's choice was made known by the lot (Acts- 1: 24). Paul was chosen by Christ in a special appearance (Acts 26:15-18; I Cor. 15:8).

(3) Of Local Churches. Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the church at Antioch in accordance with directions given by the Spirit (Acts 13:1-3). They reported back to that church (Acts 14:27). They were styled "apostles" (Acts 14:4, 14) because they were messengers or missionaries sent forth by the church at Antioch. Paul was an apostle of Christ as well as an apostle of the church. Epaphroditus was a messenger (apostle) of the church at Philippi (Phil. 2:25). In 2 Cor. 8:23 the messengers (apostles) under consideration were men chosen and sent out by local churches.

It is a serious mistake to suppose that the apostles or messengers of the individual congregations were successors to the apostles of Christ.

James the Lord's brother may have been an apostle either of Christ or of the church at Jerusalem, or both. Some Bible students think the word "brother" in Gal. 1: 19 is used in the sense of "kinsman" and that this is James the son of Alpheus. Macknight advances this position. Others think that "brother" is to be taken literally and that he was called an apostle because he was a "pillar" in the church at Jerusalem (Gal. 2:9). Vincent says (Word Studies, Vol. 4, P. 91), "James is counted as an apostle, though not reckoned among the twelve." There is absolutely nothing said about his being a "successor" to anybody.

It is true that Matthias was chosen to fill the ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell. However, the selection of a replacement for Judas prior to the establishment of the church does not prove that all the apostles were to have successors after the establishment of the church. The Bible says nothing about a "quorum" being kept complete, and there is not the slightest evidence that Paul was chosen to succeed anyone.

No one could be an apostle of Christ without being a witness of the risen Lord. This qualification is stressed in Acts 1:21, 22. Paul appealed to his having seen Jesus as proof of his apostleship (I Cor. 9:1; 15:8). An essential function of the apostolic office was bearing witness for Christ (John 15:27; Acts 1:8; 26:16). A "witness" is one who testifies about what he has seen and heard. Another witness might testify along the same line, but by the nature of the case, a witness could not have a successor as a witness. A man testifying in court might step down and another witness replace him on the stand, but the court would not admit one who has seen and heard nothing but who claims to be the "successor" of one who has testified. The

men of our generation who claim to be "successors" to the apostles have not seen the risen Lord.

Another essential function of the apostles of Christ was revealing the truth. Jesus promised his apostles that the Spirit would guide them, into "all truth" (John 16:13). Peter affirmed that they were given "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1: 3). What they were taught, they wrote by inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Since they were guided into all truth and that truth is preserved in the scriptures, men who believe and follow the scriptures are being guided by the apostles. It is just as important that we continue steadfastly "in the apostles' doctrine" today as it was for believers, in the first century (Acts 2:42). The apostles of Christ performed a work of witnessing and revealing truth which is passed down to our day, not by succession in office, but through the infallible record of the New Testament.

If it be argued that apostles are needed today to oversee an ever-expanding church, I would remind the reader that the work of oversight is assigned to the elders (also called bishops or pastors) in the local churches (Acts 20:17,28; Tit. 1: 5; 1 Pet. 5:1-5).

Apostolic succession is a basic belief and regarded as highly important to Roman Catholics. James Cardinal Gibbons wrote, "Not only is it required that ministers of the Gospel should conform their teaching to the doctrine of the Apostles, but also that these ministers should be ordained and commissioned by the Apostles or their legitimate successors" (The Faith of Our Fathers, p. 33). Hundreds of religionists claim to be "legitimate successors" to the apostles of Christ, but they were not chosen by the Lord, they have not seen the risen Lord, and they do not teach what the apostles taught as revealed in the New Testament. Paul described such men in 2 Cor. 11:13.

"Few things have been more injurious to the cause of Christianity than the assumption on the part of ordinary office-bearers in the Church of the peculiar prerogatives of the 'holy apostles of our Lord Jesus' "(Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature by M'clintock & Strong, Vol. 1, p. 311).

- Irvin Himmel, TRUTH MAGAZINE, XVI: 23, pp. 7-9

- > "If evolution were true, mothers would have more than two hands."
 - > "Things turn out best for those who make the best of the way things turn out."
 - > "We must all suffer from one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. The difference is discipline weighs ounces while regret weighs tons."
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 - > "God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, sun without rain, but He did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears, and light for the way"
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SUNDAY'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"On Target Private Prayer!"* (text: Luke 18:1-8); Sunday evening: Jesus Christ: A Closer Look – *Without Honor In His Own Country!* (Mark 6:1-6).