

Good News

From Getwell

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The Truth in Love
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SCHEDULE OF WEEKLY ACTIVITY

SUNDAY

Bible Study.....9:30 a.m.
Worship.....10:20 a.m.
Worship.....5:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

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ON THE HOME FRONT

It is truly a blessing to be a part of an eldership that oversees the printing, publishing and distribution of the *Spiritual Sword*, God has blessed this journal. The quarterly distribution is approximately 23,000 readers and growing. The subscription price covers printing costs and postage costs. Any shortfall is covered by Getwell and generous donors.

I am often touched by the communication we receive regarding the *Spiritual Sword*. Recently we received an order from a brother in Woodbridge, Virginia for 50 copies for his home congregation. We also received an order from a 92-year-old sister in Christ for a subscription for her three children. Last week we sent 62 copies to a mission work in Honduras. As I said earlier it is truly an honor to be associated with this work.

The most recent issue of the *Spiritual Sword* is currently going out. The theme of this issue is "A Handy Guide To The Eldership". As an elder I find this issue particularly helpful. Personally, I thank brother Highers for this issue.

Following is a listing of the articles found in this issue:

- 1 Editorial..... Alan E. Highers
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- 5 Words Describing Elders..... Justin Rogers
- 9 Family Qualifications..... Glenn Colley
- 13 Qualifications in First Timothy..... Gary C. Hampton
- 17 Qualifications in Titus..... Hiram Kemp
- 21 The Authority of Elders..... Allen Webster
- 25 The Work of Elders..... Ben F. Vick, Jr.
- 29 The Duty of Elders Toward Unfaithful Members..... Steve Higginbotham
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Ron Wallace

RON'S REMINDERS



This is the last article David Pharr wrote. The first part ran in last weeks article and this week is the second part of his article.

The Development of the Papacy David R. Pharr The Spiritual Sword, April 2023, Vol. 54 #3

Until the Reformation

Early claims were made for papal authority over temporal as well as ecclesiastical affairs. Pope Galasius I (492-496) claimed authority higher than kings and emperors. After Pope Symmachus (501) had been charged with adultery and other crimes, his defenders asserted that the Roman bishop is above every human tribunal. Such claims notwithstanding, even to late in the Middle Ages "emperors and general councils deposed and appointed popes." Strangely, the Church generally, including the clergy, had no problem accepting this. Issues of doctrine, even morality, took second place to the struggle for power (M. & S., 629). In the early 10th century, the papacy had such a succession of reprobates that it became known as the "pornocracy." Emperor Otho I had to step in to have Pope John XII convicted of murder, blasphemy, and all kinds of lewdness (Ibid., 630). For a period of time in the eleventh century three men claimed the title of pope at the same time until the emperor removed all three and appointed his cousin in their place (Mattox, 191).

Power vacillated between popes and kings for several centuries, but the papacy continued its quest for universal authority. In the time of Gregory VII (Hildebrand) the claim was made, among other things, that the pope "had power over all bishops; that only his feet should be kissed by "all princes"; that he could depose Emperors; and that he might absolve subjects of evil temporal rulers "from their allegiance." Gregory demonstrated this sovereignty by

excommunicating Henry IV of the Holy Roman Empire. Seeking release from excommunication, the emperor crossed the Alps to meet Pope Gregory. This emperor was required to stand barefoot in the snow for three days before allowed an audience (Cairns, 229f).

The enslaving superstition by which the Roman hierarchy controlled the populace was its system of sacraments. "Sacraments" (not a biblical concept) were the means by which one could receive Divine grace and sacraments could be administered only by a priest. Every person, therefore, depended upon the mediation of a priest. The pope as the high priest (pontiff) has ultimate say as to the dispensation of sacraments. By withholding sacraments (excommunication) individuals could be brought under papal control. By a device called "interdiction" the pope could order that no priest in a given country could administer the sacraments. This so terrified the superstitious citizenry that the king was forced to yield to the pope. Between 1205 and 1213 Innocent III used this against King John of England and forced him to admit subservience and make annual payments to Rome (Cairns, 233). After the time of Innocent, the states began to regain some independence. Boniface VIII tried to reassert papal authority by the bull (document) *Unam Sanctum*, which declared that salvation could not be found outside the Catholic church and that submission to the pope was necessary for salvation (Ibid., 236). Early efforts to reform and

resist Catholicism were met with the atrocities of the inquisition and the massacre of thousands (Mattox, 213ff). With the spread of democracy and growth of literacy, modern Romanism presents a more moderate persona, but its autocratic hierarchy stays in place and its desire for dominion has not diminished.

Papal Infallibility

The Protestant Reformation forced Catholicism to face its degeneracy. Immorality and corruption in the Roman episcopacy were too evident to expect the people to ignore them. Protestant oppositions pressed for the Scriptures to be the only rule of faith. Hoping to counter these attacks, Pope Paul III convened the Council of Trent (1543-1549). Its conclusions as regards religious authority rejected Protestant reliance on Scripture and declared that "the traditions set forth by councils and the church fathers constituted authority equal to that of Scripture. It further stated that the hierarchy had the responsibility of determining valid tradition" (Mattox, 291). Obviously, this made the head of the hierarchy (the pope) the final authority.

It had been obvious over the centuries that popes had thought themselves infallible. The Jesuits had strongly promoted the idea, but it had not been established dogma. There was widespread conviction that councils would always have authority over popes. However,

Pius IX and Vatican Council 1870 brought the debate to an end, making papal infallibility a matter of faith. Many bishops were in opposition and were not in attendance when votes were counted. By majority vote, however, it was declared that Pius IX (and presumably all his predecessors) could make no mistake when speaking *ex cathedra* and that what is said must be eternal truth. Presuming his infallibility, Pius had already declared the Immaculate Conception of Mary. This is the doctrine that Mary herself was conceived without any taint of original sin. (Of course, the whole concept "original sin" is unbiblical.) In 1950 Pius XII issued another infallible declaration, the

Assumption of Mary, meaning that at death her body was taken directly into heaven (Cairns, 426, 475). Such "infallible" pronouncements are pillars in support of Catholic worship of Mary.

"Man of Sin"

Paul's prophecy in 2 Thessalonians 2 foresees a general apostasy and "that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped..." (2 Thess. 2:3ff). This "mystery of lawlessness" was already at work in Paul's time, but forces holding it back would eventually be taken out of the way and this apostate religion would continue until the Lord comes. Since the Reformation, conservative non-Catholic scholars have thought this pointed to the development of the papacy, that the "man of sin" is personification of the Roman pontiff. Space does not allow consideration of the many salient points which obviously fit the claims and practices of the Roman religion. It is instructive, however, that we ask: What unholy institution with religious trappings has existed from earliest times to the present day?

REFERENCES

- Cairns, Earle E., *Christianity through the Centuries*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. co., 1954.
- Mattox, F. W., *The Eternal Kingdom, Delight*, AR: Gospel Light Pub. co. 1961.
- McClintock, John & Strong, James, eds., *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol VII, Grand Rapids: 1981.
- Newman, Albert H., *A Manual of Church History*, Vol I, Philadelphia: The American Baptist Publication Society, 1933.

Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss how Rome became the center of power during the falling away.
2. What are the titles and offices claimed by the pope? How do these claims differ from New Testament teaching?
3. In what ways does the pope fit the description of the "man of sin" in 2 Thessalonians 2: 1-8?