

CHAPTER VII: UNIVERSAL PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS

God created man holy and sinless and man quickly fell from this state into one of sin and alienation from his creator. The sin problem is what separates man and God because God is holy and man is defiled by his sin. Being holy, God cannot come into contact with sin without inflicting his perfectly just wrath against it. It is for this reason that God had to send a

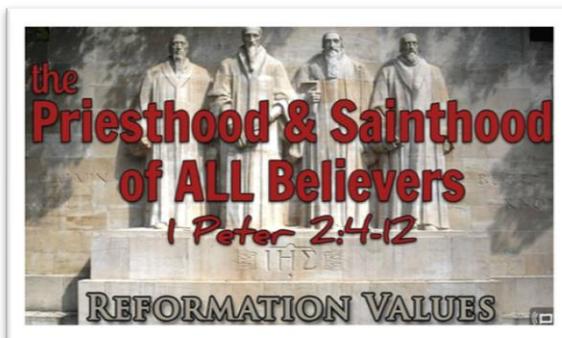


The office of mediator then stands between God and men and this office implies exclusivity. There can only be one mediator. The trouble with this though is that while accepting the one mediator Christ, as mediator deviant groups, sects and cults have always seen Christ as being not quite enough.

They set up some secondary mediator, themselves, or a favorite saint, as the second mediator. In other words, just pointing men to Christ is not enough but they must have another mediator, another Christ. Oh, they can accept that we must go through Christ to get to God but then they insist that since they alone have the true version of the gospel, we have to go through them in order to get to Christ. Thus, they make themselves a false mediator, a false Christ.

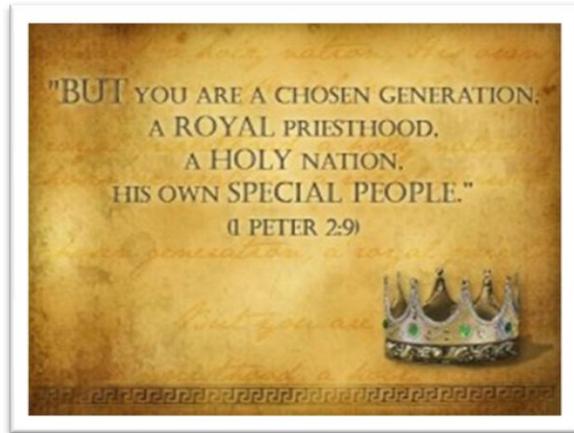
mediator to bridge the gap between

holy God and sinful man. One of the earliest places this is seen is in Exodus, where Moses, who is the symbolic representation of the mediator God would later send into the world—Christ, stands between the people and God. As the scripture says, they received the law at the hands of a mediator. Exodus 20:19, *"And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."*



The Jehovah's Witnesses are a typical example of this sort of false Christ. They believe that you cannot just come to Christ but that you must go through them to get to Christ. Another commonly seen mistake is to set up another mediator, or go between, between men and Christ such as the Virgin Mary.

Yes, you can be saved from your sins by coming to Christ but you can only come to Christ



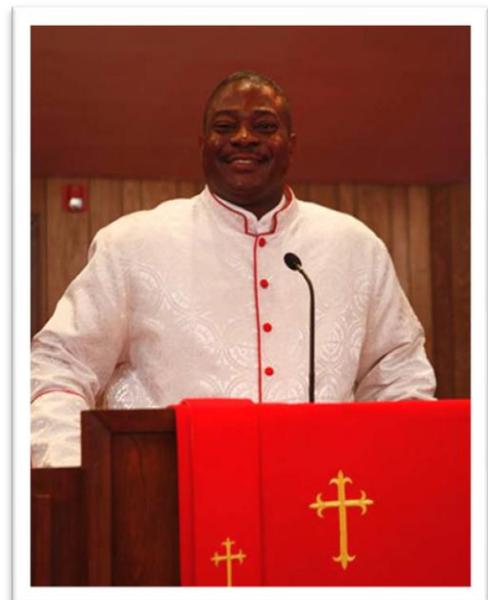
through the Virgin Mary his mother or through some saint. The Roman church is the most obvious but by no means the only example of this, and Mary is by no means the only false Christ in their doctrine. In fact, in Roman Catholic theology the very office of the priest is that of a mediator between men and God and the Latin title of the priest, *Alter Christus*, literally means *another Christ*. All manmade religions tend to invent an order of professional clergy or a priesthood to act as a go between for sinful humanity to have access to God but the only one that God will allow this office is the one he has

chosen for that very purpose—Jesus Christ our only true mediator. Any group or teacher that claims that you have to go through them to get to Christ or that outside of them is no salvation, is unequivocally a false Christ. Any man that claims that you have to go through him in order to get to God is a false Christ, and must at all costs be avoided.

PRIESTCRAFT: THE RISE OF THE MINISTRY

In the New Testament, all believers are equally justified. The apostle Paul was no more saved than the least Christian who ever lived. The apostles Paul and Peter and the rest of them were nothing more than sinners saved by grace the same as any other Christian. In the New Testament, there is no clergy/laity distinction. The offices of pastor, teacher, evangelist and the others are nothing more than particular duties and work to which God called some saints and in no way set those called to such work over their fellow believers.

There is a disturbing trend in Pentecostalism today towards priestcraft. In God's eyes, the office of pastor or teacher is no more honorable than a mechanic, a bricklayer, or a computer programmer. Too often today, those in the ministry, particularly in Pentecostal and charismatic circles tend to exalt themselves above the "common" Christians. This is a direct result of there being no doctrine of the priesthood of the believer and when this doctrine is absent, priestcraft is always the inevitable result. You do not need anybody but Jesus. Jesus forbade religious titles such as pastor and the New Testament church never used them. Everyone was on a first name informal basis because all were equal and had equal access to God. Of course, the professional clergy and those having an interest in promoting priestcraft won't like that but it is the truth.



Priestcraft is the inevitable result of not having the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.

Of course Roman Catholicism or the world of cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses are not the only places where this happens, in Protestantism it just takes a different outward form. A few years back there was something mostly within Pentecostal and charismatic circles called the shepherding movement, which was a trend that allowed and encouraged pastors to take over the lives of church members to a completely unscriptural extent.

For example, some people would not go on vacation unless they got approval from their pastor and had him ok their plans and where they were going and when they went and how long they stayed. Some Pastors got the idea that they could tell people how to dress and where they could go or not go, and how to run their businesses and all sorts of ridiculous unscriptural nonsense. To allow any human being such control over you is placing a man in the stead of God. It is basically saying, I can't trust Jesus because I can't see him so instead I'll take this man as my guide.

To teach such a thing is to encourage people to be dependent upon the pastor rather than to develop their own faith and depend on Christ. It is actually discouraging people from developing their own walk of faith and trust in the Lord but instead to be dependent upon the so called "man of God." It is robbing Jesus of his rightful position as the only mediator and it is robbing God of his relationship with his people. Instead, the people are encouraged to go through the pastor and to have no relationship with God apart from the pastor. It is the grossest idolatry; it's not merely a weakness or a mistake it's a sin.

To turn the church into the same mad scramble for prestige, position, and power is the

inevitable result when the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer is absent. Not only are the common Christians taught to be discontent and made to feel like they are second class citizens in the church, but those in the ministry are constantly engaged in a fight to climb to the top of the leadership heap. Thus, good men are turned from caring concern for the sheep to a petty businessman-like ambition to turn their ministry into an ever bigger and more commercially successful enterprise.

