

Not a "Holy Father,"

"REVEREND"

Or "Doctor" in All Their Number

IT IS INTERESTING to read the writings of the apostles and other men of inspiration in the New Testament. Of course the basic content of their documents is most important. But other incidental truths are apparent and very relevant. Unlike the way we write letters today, the writer's name and identity comes first. The unimposing way in which they identified themselves is most impressive. In Paul's earliest epistles, he doesn't even call himself an apostle (1 & 2 Thessalonians). Later in dealing with church problems, etc., it was proper for others to be aware of his God-given authority. The term "apostle" was simply supplied. But this was not in arrogance, as he humbly equates this with grace (unmerited favor) that has been bestowed upon him (Romans 1:5; 15:15; 1 Corinthians 15:9,10). "Servant" was not an expression foreign to his use (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1). Even though James and Jude in the flesh were half-brothers of the Lord, they called them-

selves “servants [*douloi*, slaves] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1; Jude 1). Peter, although chief among the apostles, simply called himself, “Simon Peter, a servant [*doulos*, slave] and an apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1). And in his speaking of Paul, he called him “our beloved brother Paul” (2 Peter 3:15). The apostle John in Revelation 1:1 makes reference to himself as “his [Christ’s] servant [*doulos*, slave] John.” Conspicuous in its absence in all of these writings of these Spirit-inspired men is the term “Reverend.” There was not a “Holy Father,” or “Doctor” in all of their number.

They wrote by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and those who had been with the Lord could well remember how he came down heavy on the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23. Here Jesus said: “...[They] love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is

in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.”

The word “Rabbi” comes from “rab,” which means great. “Rabbi” means “My Great One.” “Rabonni” was a Galilean version of “Rabbi.” But the Jews even had a more extended use of the word in “Rabban,” which signified the greatest ones (reserved for Gamaliel, and limited numbers like him). All of this runs against the grain of what Jesus said. We are all brothers (and sisters). There are no big “Ts” or little “you’s.” Even as he taught that we should let our “yea” be “yea,” and “Nay, nay” (Matthew 5:37), our names should not be embellished with such pretentious titles, religious or otherwise, in the ranks of the saints. The whole clergy concept, coming out of the apostasy of the Dark Ages, is foreign to the teachings of the New Testament.

And as far as the term “Reverend” is concerned, Psalms 111:9 says that “holy and reverend” (KJV) is God’s name, not ours. This word “reverend” here is translated from a Hebrew word that means awesome. Is that what clergymen think of themselves? Something is strangely amiss.

Remember. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ in a priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:5,9), as we humbly serve the Lord and one another. □

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