THE APOSTLES were NOT "REVERENDS"  
-Extracts by Philip Lancaster  
  
The world and the church agree about how you should address me.  
My proper name and title, by unanimous consent, is: The Reverend  
Mister Philip H. Lancaster.  
  
I am one of the elite cadre of persons who has the right to be  
addressed as Reverend" ("Worthy of reverence; revered. A member  
of the clergy.") This distinction is mine because I successfully  
completed a three-year graduate program in theology (I'm also a  
"Master of Divinity") and passed a theological exam before a body  
of ministers and elders. Upon passing that examination I was  
ordained and granted the privilege of being addressed as Reverend.  
This distinction also entitled me to be the pastor of a church: its  
preacher, the one who oversees the church ordinances, and the  
one privileged to "pronounce the benediction."  
  
According to the church and the world, I am one set apart. I am a  
member of the clergy, and my title distinguishes me as such.  
Sounds pretty good, huh?  
  
Yes, it sounds good to modern ears. But there is a little problem:  
the title and what it implies is an affront to Jesus Christ and an  
insult to every other man in the church.  
  
As an expression of my submission to my Lord I renounce the  
title and resist its implications.  
  
Jesus said, "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only  
one Master and you are all brothers" (Matt. 23). Our Lord goes on  
to forbid other honorific titles among his people, the church, and  
then concludes, "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and  
whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (v. 12).  
  
Jesus explicitly forbade setting any man apart in the church by  
means of a special title-and yet the church has done it since not  
long after the apostolic age. Why is such a practice such an  
affront to Christ? Because he alone is Head and Master of his church.  
  
The concept of a professional clergy, which corrupted the church  
within a few centuries of the apostles, was a direct expression of  
worldly concepts of leadership and power. Whereas Jesus had  
adorned himself with a towel and became a servant to his followers  
(John 13), "clergymen" began to adorn themselves with special  
robes and collars and assumed a place of superiority over the  
congregation of the church. Although later the Reformation removed  
some of the worst abuses of this clerical system, it retained the  
distinction between the "clergy" and the "laity", a distinction which  
survives to this day.  
  
Do we see any evidence of a clergy/laity distinction in the New  
Testament? None whatsoever. We see quite the opposite: the  
church leaders were ordinary men who humbly served the flock  
and who neither sought nor accepted any special status, title or  
dress that set them apart from the rest of the brothers.  
Unschooled, Ordinary Men...  
  
The clergy system is a direct attack upon the very nature of the  
body of Christ. It introduces a false concept of a special spiritual  
class, with the accompanying temptation to pride and abuse of  
power that comes when one man is exalted positionally over  
others. It also leads to passivity on the part of those who are, by  
implication at least, "second class" in the church. Members of the  
body do not use their gifts to carry on ministry since the  
professional "minister" is doing the work.  
  
Perhaps the worst result of the clergy system is that it stifles the  
spiritual development of the men of the congregation. God's plan is  
that ordinary, unschooled men can become elders, overseers and  
shepherds (pastors) of God's flock. They can grow in grace, can  
learn their Bibles, can develop leadership in their families... They  
do not have to go to Bible college or seminary. They can strive  
through on-the-job training to be leaders in the congregation.  
However, the clergy system removes this possibility from most  
men and smothers the godly ambition to servant-leadership. So  
men are unchallenged, and the congregation is weakened-not  
to mention its families whose leaders are given no practical  
incentive for spiritual growth...  
  
We must abandon the model that burns out one man and leaves  
the rest unchallenged.  
  
--Source:   
  
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