

## HOW ARE SAINTS MADE?

There are honours that no man can arrogate to himself or can give to another but which the Almighty God alone gives. And such is the honour to be a saint. But the age-long tendency of some in Christendom to impose their own dogmas and traditions upon their adherents in complete disregard of the tenets of Christianity as enunciated in the Scriptures has in most cases been the cause of misunderstanding.

When we make reference to the first President of God's Kingdom Society, the late Gideon M. Urhobo, as a saint, some people look at us with frowns of disapproval and some others express great surprise. We have always been confronted with questions such as;

(1) Who made G. M. Urhobo a saint?

(2) When was he canonized? and

(3) Where was he canonized?

Some of our Roman Catholic friends have put it straight to us that it is only the Pope who can declare a person a saint.

It is gratifying to note that such questions have every so often provoked frank religious discussions through which many people have emerged from behind the clouds of ignorance to the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The issue as to how saints are made or how they can be identified cannot be resolved unless we go straight to the Holy Bible, which all Christians accept as their guidebook and authority. The Christian policy is that ANY teaching or practice which is not in conformity with the Scriptures must be rejected. And so St. Paul stated: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed..."-Gal. 1: 8, 9.

With a dispassionate mind, we have carefully considered the claims of the Roman Catholic Church in regard to canonization as well as the system whereby certain persons had been beatified and made saints and have come to the conclusion that the claims are scripturally unsustainable.

### Canonization

Writing on "How Saints Are Made" in a Roman Catholic magazine, The Gold Coast CATHOLIC VOICE, July 1954, Msgr. Joseph J. Sullivan stated that any Catholic may petition a Bishop to begin the cause of a person whom he considers fit for canonization, and the Bishop may begin the informative process. According to the Monsignor, when the various parts of the informative process are completed a notarized copy is sent to the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome for scrutiny. "It is the Pope who finally decides whether the cause should proceed or not."

With regard to the scrutinising of the informative process report, Msgr. Sullivan wrote: "First the Congregation examines whether the process was carried out properly; then it studies the results of the investigation. In each case, an official of the Congregation called the Promoter General of the Faith acts as the 'Devil's Advocate' and opposes the continuance of the cause from every possible viewpoint. His objections are carefully weighed and considered by the Congregation."

The Monsignor added: "According to the heroic virtue by a person is not permitted law, formal investigation into the practice of until 50 years after his death..."

It is when the Pope is satisfied at the end of the various ceremonies that he, at the third request of the postulator of the cause, declares, "In honour of the Holy Trinity, for the glory of

the Catholic faith and the progress of the Christian religion, in virtue of the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and of his own plenary and proper authority,' that the servant of God in question shall be inscribed on the register of the saints (Canon Sanctorum')..." (Addis & Arnold's Catholic Dictionary, page 112).

The Catholic Voice (Jan. 1956) stated positively: "Only the Pope can speak the words that declare a person a saint."

We wish to recall here that Catholics agree that "the whole Bible is the word of God" and "it is a Catholic teaching that there is no error in the Bible." And concerning the Bible, a Catholic newspaper, the INDEPENDENT (Oct. 16-22, 1966) has this to say: "Not only must Priests find in the Bible the source of their sacred learning, nourishment for their interior life, and substance for the instruction of their people, but the people, too, should be encouraged and helped to read the sacred scriptures for themselves."

Well, can anybody cite the Sacred Scriptures to show that saints are ordained in the way the Roman Catholic Church is doing? Who acted as the "devil's advocate" when Peter, Paul, or any other apostle was made a saint? From whom did that tedious process of canonization with all the formalities and ceremonies originate? Was it from Christ or Peter or Paul?

Moreover, where in the Bible is it stated that a person must die before he is made a saint? Or that it should be 50 years after a person's death before he is declared a saint? Did Peter, Paul, or any other apostle canonize anybody at all? What is the name of that person who was canonized? And where in the Bible is the record?

### **Holy Person**

A Saint is a holy or sanctified person. One who has received the anointing of the Holy Spirit and is therefore set aside by God through Jesus Christ for holy uses. The early apostles of Jesus Christ stand out as practical examples.

Many people are ignorant of the fact that the fold of God's sheep under the shepherdship of Jesus Christ is composed mainly of two categories or classes of Christians: the Little Flock and the Other Sheep. (Luke 12: 32; John 10:16) The Little Flock is made up of the apostles, who having been anointed must devote their lives exclusively to the service of God. All other believers who are not anointed, no matter how high the degree of their knowledge of the Scripture, like Timothy and Titus, are the Other Sheep.

Jesus Christ himself made this clear distinction when he specially chose twelve out of the multitude of his followers and called them APOSTLES. (Mark 3: 13-19; Luke 6: 12-16) At that stage, the ordination of the apostles was not yet complete in that they had not been anointed with the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus Christ gave them a promise to the effect that "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost (Spirit), whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things." (John 14: 26; Acts 1:8) This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles. (Acts 2: 1-4) But before then Judas Iscariot, who proved unworthy of the grace of God, being the son of perdition, had fallen and killed himself, and his office had been given to Matthias. -Acts 1: 15-26.

The twelve apostles were the foundation members of those that make up the Little Flock, but later on others like Stephen, Paul, Cornelius, and so on were chosen. And though Cornelius was a gentile, God showed that he had been sanctified having received His grace. For concerning him the angel of God said to St. Peter, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." Acts 10:15.

St. Paul, introducing himself in his epistle to the Roman Christians, stated: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." (Rom. 1: 1) And he further stated: "And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,

because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." - Rom. 8:27, 29-30.

It is such ones like St. Paul who are anointed, set apart or chosen by God Himself through Jesus Christ for the ministry of the Gospel, and who are the firstborn among Christians that are the saints. St. Paul referred to that group of Christians as the "Church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven." --Heb. 12: 22, 23.

And God said: "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." (Ps. 50: 5) It is as a result of that covenant by sacrifice that they are prepared to undergo any form of persecution the devil may devise and even die for the sake of the Gospel. But Christ said: "....Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." -Rev. 2: 10.

What is obtaining in the Catholic Church is quite the opposite of the scriptural facts herein brought to light. People whose professions had nothing to do with the Gospel have been canonized or made saints. A Catholic Dictionary (formerly "The Catholic Encyclopaedic Dictionary") has this to say: "The canonized saints form a microcosm of the Church; among them are to be found representatives of all forms of human life, activity, and temperament...Nor are their activities and greatness directed in strictly religious channels only; besides so many priests and monks and nuns, the Church has canonized emperors and kings and queens, soldiers, artisans, domestic servants, beggars, housemaids, lawyers, merchants, society dames, farmers and their labourers, artists, physicians, a retired hangman—sanctity is an order for which all are eligible." (Page 444)

Roman Catholic authorities do admit that there had been abuses in their system of canonization. Despite the fact that some of the defects were said to have been remedied by the tenth century when Ulric, Bishop of Augsburg, was canonized, the Addis & Arnold's Catholic Dictionary states: "Still, however, through the inordinate fondness with which those of a particular country or religious order regarded holy persons of their own blood or profession, instances of abusive cultus sometimes occurred."-(Page 110).

We have made it clear that saints are not made by man. They are called to be saints by God through Jesus Christ, and they are devoted entirely to His service, preaching the gospel of His Kingdom. It is their duty to pronounce God's judgment written in the Bible to warn men against sin. As it is written: "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people...To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all His saints..." (Ps. 149: 5-9) And St. Paul stated: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?..." (1 Cor. 6: 2, 3)

This duty of judgment they discharge through the preaching of the gospel of Christ.- John 12: 48.

It is quite clear from all this that saints are not ordained after death. And St. Paul writing to the Corinthian believers generally, the saints inclusive, stated: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord,... Grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father, and from Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 1:2, 3). The saints among them were living Christians, and St. Paul could not have sent greetings with the wishes of grace and peace to dead people.

The saints are also priests and kings. (Rev. 1:6 They are taught by God in spirit and need not attend seminaries or colleges for academic qualifications. And St. John wrote: "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." -1 John 2:27.

And so the principal mark by which a saint can be identified is the TRUTH of God's word, which he must preach unmixed with lies. For "no lie is of the truth" said John the apostle. (1 John 2: 21) There are other marks such as visions and persecutions for the sake of the Gospel but these can sometimes be seen in counterfeit prophets, so much that they can hardly be distinguished from the saints by those without spiritual understanding. But false prophets can never preach the truth without adulteration!

If beggars, domestic servants, housemaids, labourers and a hangman can be saints, why should it be a sin for Gideon M. Urhobo to be a saint? Is it because he is a black man, an African, a Nigerian, or an Urhobo man? But God does not discriminate against anyone because of his colour, race, or tribe. - Acts 10:34, 35.

The works of the late G. M. Urhobo show clearly that he was chosen to be a saint. Apart from other spiritual aspects of his life, he preached the TRUTH fearlessly, uncompromisingly, and unadulteratedly. And Jesus Christ said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." - Matt. 7: 20. The Saints are comparatively few. "Many are called, but few are chosen," said Jesus Christ. To be among the anointed few who are the saints or priests is a great honour. And St. Paul declared: "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." -Heb. 5: 4.