



UNMASKING SOPHISTRY

A Journal of Christian Evidences and Comparative Religions

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"See to it that there is no one who takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception in accordance with human tradition, in accordance with the elementary principles of the world, rather than in accordance with Christ."

(Colossians 2:8, NASB)

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From The Editor's Desk

With great joy, we present to you the fourth edition of Unmasking Sophistry Magazine. It is the first issue in the year 2022. We thank God for the grace He has given to us to see this new year. As usual, this journal is designed to teach the truth of God's word as well as expose the various arguments that have been prepared in defense of false religion and arguments designed to oppose the Christian faith. In order to cover a wide range of areas, various sections have been created in this journal and topics relating to each of the sections will be discussed at every edition in a consistent manner.

In the last edition of this journal, we examined various subjects under each of the sections such as: *The Whole Duty of Man (Part 2)*; *Bible Versus Other Religious Books*; *Unity in Diversity – What Is Wrong?*; *A Discourse on Infant Baptism*; *The Protestant Reformation Movement*; *Speaking in Tongues*; *Who Are The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4?*; *When Parents Fail*; *Limited Atonement*; *Evangelism*; *Why Not Take The Lord's Supper At Night?*; and a few other exciting topics. We appreciate all the lovely feedbacks received from our dear readers. Please, we would like to hear more from you.

Meanwhile, this edition shall focus on topics such as; *Pain And Suffering: An Emotional Appeal*; *God's Plan For The Homosexuals*; *The Oneness Doctrine*; *A Discourse on Speaking In Tongues*; *The Great Awakening*; *The Blessings Of Autonomy*; *A Glorious Tongue*; *Home Training*; *Myths Often Told About The Birth Of Christ*; *The Work Of The Holy Spirit In Conversion*; *Matthew 28:19 and the Triune God*; *What Should Christians Celebrate About Christ?*; and other intriguing topics. We have also included a section tagged "Testimonials" wherein the comments of people about Unmasking Sophistry Magazine are included.

You are warmly reminded that *Unmasking Sophistry Magazine* is available online and all editions (past and present) can be accessed and downloaded online at www.unmaskingsophistry.com/downloads

The open door policy of the magazine is still very much intact – if anyone disagrees with an article in any edition of the magazine, such could write a rebuttal to it and we would be willing to publish it in the same issue to which the article he is replying appeared. Alternatively, a proposition will be set for the writer of the article and whoever dissents to affirm and deny respectively as the case may be – with the aim of knowing the truth on the subject matter.

We wish you all a Happy New Year (2022) and pray that we all become more steadfast in the work of God. Once again, all the prayers, feedbacks and encouragements from readers are duly appreciated. We would continue to hold fast the pattern of sound words which we have heard from the apostles, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (II Timothy 1:13; Acts 2:42).

God's Love and Blessings

Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba
Editor

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

Pain and Suffering In The World: An Emotional Appeal Against God's Existence

Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

If we make a list of all the troubles in the world and then conclude that these problems prove that God does not exist, we could as well make a list of all the blessings and happiness in the world and then conclude that God exists. In other words, if the pain and suffering in the world is an indication that God does not exist, then the blessings and happiness in the world should be an indication that He exists!

An emotional appeal is a logical fallacy (or an error in reasoning), whereby a person attempts to win an argument by trying to get an emotional reaction from the opponent and audience. It is usually characterized by the manipulation of the recipient's emotions in order to win an argument, especially in the absence of factual evidence. Let us keep this definition in mind as we discuss the problem of evil, pain and suffering vis a vis the existence of God.

That there are so many bad and terrible things happening in the world on a daily basis is a fact that is too plain to be denied. Many good people that we know have died mysteriously and this leaves us in pain. Babies die at birth and some, even before they were born. We hear of car accidents, plane crashes, tornadoes, sicknesses, etc. and several other painful upheavals that inflict pain on people and which ultimately lead to loss of lives. As a result of these, the agnostics and atheists alike have tried to disparage the existence of God.

The reasoning is usually put forth, that if there is a loving and powerful God who is in control of the world, He would not allow humans to suffer. And so, they conclude that since pain and suffering are present in the world, then such is an indication that the Christian God does not exist. This is because, according to them, an all loving, all powerful God will not allow people to suffer and experience pain if He can actually stop it. Thus, they think that the problem of evil, pain and suffering is a great challenge for

anyone who believes in God.

In his debate with Kyle Butt on the subject of pain, suffering and the existence of God, the agnostic, Bart Ehrman reasoned along that line as he insists that all of the suffering in the world is an indication that the Christian God does not exist. But this reasoning seems more like an emotional appeal. In fact, that is exactly what it is. If we sit and make a list of all the troubles in the world and then conclude that these problems prove that God does not exist, we could as well sit down to make a list of all the blessings and happiness in the world and then conclude that God exists. In other words, if the pain and suffering in the world is an indication that God does not exist, then the blessings and happiness in the world should be an indication that God exists! Imagine how many homes are blessed with kids every now and then; imagine how many people get new jobs; imagine how many people get promoted at their work places, imagine how many farmers are blessed with good harvest, etc. Would not all of these be an indication that God exist if all of the bad things are indication of the non-existence of God? We can see that the atheists' reasoning is just an emotional appeal. When you turn it around and show them the other side of it, their confusion becomes obvious.

The truth is: pain and suffering in the world is not an indication that our good God does not exist. In fact, it is actually an indication that He does exist and this should not be a problem to faithful Christians. In the



first place, how do we even know that something is evil if God has not said it? Like Kyle Butt rightly said; "If humans evolved over millions of years by accidental processes, how could humans have any idea about what is evil and what is good? If all humans were simply the product of evolution, then every person's opinion would be just as "right" as all other people's opinions." If there is no God, then we cannot have anything called evil in the world. Someone may think it is okay to steal but we know that this is not right because God said it (Exodus 20:15; Ephesians 4:28). And since we have a Divine Being that tells us what is good and what is evil and commands us to abstain from what is evil (Genesis 6:5; James 1:13; I Thessalonians 5:22; Romans 12:9; Isaiah 5:20), then we should acknowledge and reverence Him.

God is not oblivious of our pain. On several occasions, the Bible tells us that we will have tribulation in the world (John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Romans 5:3; 8:35; 12:12; II Corinthians 1:4; 7:4; I Thessalonians 3:4; Revelation 1:9; 2:10). All of these passages point to the fact that as we run the Christian race, we will have troubles and because God allows it does not mean He is not good. God can still be all-good while allowing us to suffer. A doctor, while treating a patient, may give some injections. The patient may feel pain while being injected but that is not to say the doctor is not good, loving or that he is bad. The doctor is actually giving him what will be beneficial to him. In the same way, God allows us to suffer, preparing us for the afterlife, a better place arranged for us (John 14:1-4). Suffering is what draws us closer to God and makes us yearn for perfection with Him. Perfection would leave us without a desire to be with God. Jesus came and suffered for us, the ultimate proof of His love for us. We also must suffer, but God is with us and will bring justice at judgment. We are to "count it all joy when we

fall into various trials" (James 1:2-3). This is because we have someone who is greater than our problems. God created man a free moral agent and not robotic. Inasmuch as man has the freedom to make choices, then people could choose to do evil or good. Pain and suffering came into the world as a result of the action of man (eating the forbidden fruit) and pain and suffering will continue inasmuch as man continues to have the freedom to make choices.

In conclusion, the problem of evil, pain and suffering is not an argument against God's existence. It is simply an emotional appeal – an error in reasoning and this trick is often offered by atheists because there is actually no factual evidence to prove the non-existence of God.

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WORLD RELIGIONS

God's Plan For The Homosexuals

Rowland Femi Gbamis | Ontario, Canada

The scriptural injunction is that a man should get a woman to marry, and a woman should marry a man. Anything contrary to this scriptural direction on marriage is a perversion from the devil to lead humankind to eternal perdition.

From the beginning of the world, God's provision of salvation in Christ Jesus is that man be saved. This amazing grace of salvation was envisioned prior to creation. Before man was made in God's image, our all-knowing and loving Creator purposed to save lost and sinful humanity through His beloved Son. (cf. John 1:1-5; Ephesians 1:3-7; 3:8-11; 1 Peter 1:20-21; Revelation 13:8). This plan finds its centre and fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. At the appropriate time, God sent His Son, that through Him we might be redeemed and delivered from this present evil age "according to the will of our God and Father" (Galatians 4:4-5; 1:4). In other words, the gospel plan of salvation is for all of humankind. However, the purpose of this write-up is to address the issue of LGBTQ+. This acronym stands for **lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer** (or sometimes questioning). The "plus" represents other sexual identities, including pansexual and Two-Spirit (THE CENTER, 2021).

Conflict Between The Law Of Man And God

Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32). In most Western countries, particularly Canada, speaking the same truths proclaimed in God's Word could potentially land Christians in jail. For instance, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (TCCRF) is a Charter that enforces the constitutional guarantee of every citizen's civil rights and liberties in Canada, such as freedom of

thought, belief, opinion and expression, freedom of conscience and religion, and mobility. This Charter is Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982. (*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 2021*). TCCRF guarantees the rights and freedoms set out in it subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by the Law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society. Therefore, when a preacher seeks to preach based on his conviction on Bible subjects such as homosexuals and the likes, citing his constitutionally protected right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion, he often meets a brick wall. In other words, Christian ministers who condemn homosexual behaviour can be subject to hate crime prosecution. Markedly, Canada's Supreme Court has determined that speaking out against destructive homosexual behaviours could be construed as vilification of homosexuals and, therefore, prohibited in most circumstances.

For this reason, most gospel preachers struggle to preach on homosexual behaviours for fear of being reprimanded by the Law of the land. Sad enough, most elders in the Lord's church would instead not emphasize such controversial and naughty issues in the church but diplomatically say God hates "sin". Paradoxically, it is hypocritical to note that the first statement in the Canadian constitution reads: "Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law." Unfortunately, as the years rolled by, the rule of Law has superseded the supremacy of God in this country.



Thanks to God for those that continue to speak up and are being punished for their faith (cf. Pet. 3:13-17; cf. Acts 4:19; 5:29). Jesus says:

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12 NKJV).

The above encouragement from our Lord Jesus Christ, among others in the Bible, should be our consolation in standing for what is scriptural as against the legal and political correctness of our liberalized and debauchery world.

God's Divine Composition – Man And Woman

The framework God designed from the beginning of the world concerning human sexuality is a man and a woman. Moses writes that God created them "male and female" (Gen.1: 27). Thus, it is not a happenstance that God decided to create a female partner or companion for Adam. However, God so designed it in such a way to meet the crucial needs of man, namely, in Eve, the loneliness of Adam will be taken care of because "it is not good for a man to be alone" (Gen.2:18). Eve was a perfect helper, befitting Adam in meeting his need (Gen. 2: 20). Also, God's designed arrangement in perpetuating the continuation of humanity is to be accomplished through the sexual union between Adam and Eve, not Adam and another man (Gen.1:28; 4:1). Correspondingly, in the discourse between Jesus and the Pharisees on marriage and divorce, let us observe how Jesus responded to them when they were testing Him if "it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" (Matt.19:3). Jesus' response in the

following verses revealed many truths on our subject.

And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matt. 19:4-6 NKJV).

From the above statement of Jesus, it is evident that God's plan for marriage is a man and a woman from inception. Hear loud and clear, "God made them at the beginning male and female", not man-man or woman-woman. Similarly, Apostle Paul writes, "Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." (1 Cor. 7:2). Again, let us not get it twisted; the scriptural injunction is that a man should get a woman to marry, and a woman should marry a man. Anything contrary to the above scriptural direction on marriage is a perversion from the devil to lead humankind to eternal perdition.

God Condemns The Sin Of Homosexuality

God's nature of holiness opposes sin in all of its appearances, and this very fact is made known in all of the scripture (cf. Hab.1:13). God has consistently shown in every age that His divine plan for marriage remains unchanged. For instance, during the time of the Patriarchs, we see how God frowned at the perverts at Sodom and Gomorrah for what they intend to do with the angels. Genesis 19:4-5 reads: "Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them carnally." The angels' response to Lot



shows the severity of the sin of homosexuals taking place in Sodom and Gomorrah:

Then the men said to Lot, "Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place! For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it" (Gen. 19:12-13 NKJV).

Whether in Canada or America, our location is inconsequential to God. In faithfulness to God's word, "the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah out of the heavens" (Gen.19:24). If God can destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He can still destroy those living in such a debauchery lifestyle today.

Furthermore, following the federal legislation ban on conversion therapy practices in Canada on Wednesday, December 8, 2021, which received royal assent, anyone guilty of Bill C-4 is "punishable by up to five years in prison or could face up to two years in prison" (Aiello, 2021). In other words, it is wrong to use any "pseudoscientific practice of attempting to change an individual's sexual orientation from homosexual or bisexual to heterosexual using psychological, physical, or **spiritual interventions**" ("Conversion therapy," 2001). Indeed, this bill has a severe implication for witnessing Christ in Canada. The question is: are we going to stop preaching or start compromising upon the word of God? Regardless of what our answer is, the Word of God abides forever. In the Law of Moses, the Laws of sexual immorality stipulates, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination" (Lev.18:22). In Leviticus 20:13, "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their

blood shall be upon them." Likewise, there are several admonitions to that effect in the New Testament. Apostle Paul writes to the Romans on God's Wrath on Unrighteousness:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

The above verses reveal the following truths:

First, God's indignation is against every form of ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, most especially those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. In this instance that we found ourselves in Canada and other places in North America, the Law via the instrumentality of the court is being used to suppress the truth of God's word. Second, when one decides to disregard God's authority concerning marriage, a morally debased mindset deconstructs the senses and allows humankind to do things that are not proper – gay, lesbian, bestiality and all forms of sexual perversions are set in motion. How sad that men never learn! (cf. 2 Pet 2:6-7). Similarly to the Corinthians, Apostle Paul writes, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.



Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Said differently, our God hates all forms of sins, and for that purpose, God sent Christ to come and die for our sins (John 3:16).

God's Solution For The Homosexuals (LGBTQ)

Jesus says we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free (John 8:32). The sin of homosexuals is no different from any other form of sin. Hence, Jesus is the only way to salvation. Jesus says, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt.11:28-30). Indeed, the yoke of sexual pervers can be burdensome, but Christ has promised to make it light. God is calling on the LGBTQ community to repent because the sin of homosexuality will lead to eternal destruction (Rom.6:23; 1Cor.6:9-10). Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians:

*"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1Cor.6:9-11).***

To conclude, since God forgave homosexuals and sodomites in Corinth who repented, He is willing to forgive those in North America and Europe or

anywhere, for that matter, who will repent. God will wash you clean from your sins in the water of baptism. After that, you will continue to walk in the newness of life that only God gives in Christ Jesus.

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WORLD RELIGIONS

The Oneness Doctrine

Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

The Bible teaches that **God is one**; one in essence, one in nature and at the same time, He revealed Himself in three distinct persons. What we find in the Bible is that within the One God, there exist eternally three coequal and coeternal persons – The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit.

Introduction

The "*Oneness Doctrine*" is a common concept among certain Pentecostal churches of the world. Over the years, there have been several debates on the issue of the Godhead among professed Christians. Particularly, members in the churches of Christ have debated Pentecostal preachers on this subject. Personally, I have heard of, read and physically attended debates conducted to address this issue. One of such debates was held in 1951 between G.K. Wallace of the church of Christ and Ray Vaughn of the United Pentecostal Holiness Church in Oklahoma, USA. While Wallace denied, Vaughn affirmed that "*There is only one person in the Godhead and that Baptism is only in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" Ten years later, in 1961, the same man, Ray Vaughn met another preacher in the church of Christ, James P. Miller in Florida, USA to debate this same issue. About the year 2011, my dad, Julius Egharevba debated a denominational pastor in Abuja, Nigeria on this very subject. The pastor affirmed that there is only one person in the Godhead and that scriptural baptism must only be done in the name of Jesus while my dad denied the proposition. The debate is still very fresh in my mind. Additionally, Tommy Thrasher and Patrick Donahue; brethren in the church of Christ in North Huntsville, Alabama have debated the oneness position and the baptismal formula many times. All of these show that this subject has been an issue of controversy for many years.

However, not until very recently, I have never known

or heard of any member of the church of Christ that teach and advocate the oneness doctrine. But some "among us" have started to propagate this teaching. Well, it does not matter the number of people who upholds a doctrine. What is important is to look into God's Word and see if such doctrine is taught. We do not determine the scriptural truth by what the majority or minority say. Rather, the Word of God is our final authority. And so, like the apostles and elders came together to consider a matter of doctrine in the first century taught by people among them to which they gave no such commandment (Acts 15:6,24), we shall consider this matter as well. Thus, the aim of this writing is to examine whether the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as we find in the Bible are one single person or three distinct, separate individuals.

What Is The Oneness Doctrine?

The Oneness Doctrine states that there is one God (a singular Divine Spirit) who manifests Himself in many ways, including as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In other words, God, The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit are not THREE distinct persons but just ONE person manifesting as The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. It is based on this notion that those who advocate this doctrine insist that this one Divine being is Jesus Christ and that one must be baptize only in the name of Jesus Christ. Several Bible passages have been used (perhaps, misused) by people in an attempt to give credence to this teaching. I do not believe that the scriptures teach this and while it may



be impossible to explode all of the errors of the oneness doctrine in one single article due to space constraint, we will take time to address it gradually in different articles. Anyway, shall we begin process of unmasking this sophistry?

Why Deny That Jesus Christ Is The Son Of God?

Before addressing this issue, I wish to unequivocally state that those who deny the THREE persons in the Godhead are simply denying that Jesus is the Son of God. It is unfortunate and embarrassing for anyone who is a Christian to deny the Sonship of Christ because this is the foundation upon which our conversion/salvation rests. The Ethiopian eunuch, even before his baptism confessed that "*Jesus Christ is the son of God*" (Acts 8:37). It was after this good confession that he was baptized (Acts 8:38; cf. I Timothy 6:12). What do you think the eunuch had in mind when he made this confession? Was he thinking that Jesus (the Son) is the same person as God, the Father? If Jesus is the Son of God, then the son and the Father cannot be a single person. And if they are a single person, Jesus cannot be the son of Himself. If a man has a son and he has a father, such could be called a father and a son because he is a father to someone and he is a son to someone but how in the world would someone be the same person as his own son or how can one be the same individual as his own father? The advocates of the oneness doctrine are saying there is only one person – Jesus Christ. If this is true, then Jesus cannot be a son to anyone for He is THE ONLY ONE. I cannot be my own son and my own father. More than once, Jesus is called the son of God (II John 3; II Corinthians 1:3; John 3:16; Matthew 3:17; 16:16-17; 17:5; Romans 15:6; I John 1:3). God sent forth His son to be born of a woman (Galatians 4:4). We really need to understand how a father and a son can be ONE single person. If not, why deny that Jesus

Christ is the Son of God?

Is There Only One Person Or More?

The Bible teaches that **God is one**; one in essence, one in nature and at the same time, He revealed Himself in three distinct persons. What we find in the Bible is that within the One God, there exist eternally three coequal and coeternal persons - The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit. Does this make sense? Let us see!

First, in Deuteronomy 6:4 where we have the statement generally known as the Shema, it reads; "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.*" The Hebrew word translated "one" in this verse is "*echad*" and from the origin of this word, it means "united" (Strong's Lexicon: **h259**). This same word is used in Genesis 2:24 when it is written that a man and his wife shall become "one flesh." It becomes clear when we understand that a man and his wife are not one single individual, but two. Here are two people, who in the eyes of God become "one."

This idea is made clearer in John 17:22 when Jesus was praying to the father and He said; "*...that they may be one just as We are one.*" Jesus prayed that His followers are to be one **just as** He and the Father are one. In what way is the son, Jesus and the Father one? If they are one in person, then it means that all of His disciples are to be **one in person** in order to be pleasing to Him. But no! Christ's disciples are not one in person; in fact, this is an impossible thing – for all of the disciples to be one single individual. Thus, Jesus was not saying that He and the Father are one single individual. However, how are Christians to be one like Jesus and the Father? We are to be one in faith, doctrine, purpose, aim, practice, etc. as seen in the following passages: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 12:12-20, 25-27; Eph. 4:1-4. So it is not out of place to have God described as "one" yet revealing Himself as three



distinct person. In fact, the Jews did not understand the *Shema* to mean that God is one single person. Right from the Old Testament, God has always indicated that His oneness has plurality. This can be seen in passages such as Genesis 1:1,26. The Hebrew word for God (Elohim; Strong's **h430**) is plural.

Second, the book of II John 9 tells that whosoever abides in the doctrine of Christ has "***both the Father and the Son.***" The dictionary defines "both" as a word "used for emphasis to refer to **two people** or things, regarded and identified together." If this is correct, then "***both the Father and the Son***" refers to TWO people identified together in the context of II John 9.

Third, in John chapter 8, we find that when the Jews accused Jesus of bearing witness of Himself (vs.13), Jesus responded by reminding them that their law required **two witnesses** (vs.17) and claimed that He was not alone because there was "I and the Father that sent me" (vs.16). Further in verse 18, He stated that He is one that bears witness of Himself **AND** the Father bears witness of Him. This showed that the requirement for two witnesses was satisfied by Jesus. In verse 29, He said "He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." If Jesus and the Father is the same individual, then Jesus would be alone and would have only one witness. But Jesus said He was not alone and He and His Father satisfied the requirement of two witnesses. This can only be correct if they constitute two separate and distinct individuals.

Fourth, in I Corinthians 8:6, we read; "***yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.***" Here we have two distinct persons; one is called God, the Father and the other is called Lord Jesus Christ. The one God is

revealed to us as the Father and also as the Son. The construction shows that their duties here also differ; it was from God, the Father that all things came and for whom we live; but in the case of Jesus, it was through Him or by Him that all things came and through whom we live. They are not only two distinct persons, their duties also differ.

Fifth, we find in II Corinthians 13:14 that "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all." Here, the THREE are mentioned and implies they are separate and distinct from the other.

Sixth, Ephesians 2:18 tells us that we have access by one Spirit unto the Father through Jesus Christ. The THREE are here again mentioned showing their distinct personalities.

Seventh, in I Peter 1:2, the apostle writes; "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." The three are also revealed here to us.

Eight, we find in 1 Corinthians 6:11 that we are "justified in the name of our Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

Ninth, we find in Matthew 12:31-32 that Jesus said that blasphemy against the Son would be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit would not be. This shows TWO distinct persons as the Son is not the Holy Spirit, for if He is, then to blaspheme the Spirit would be the same as blaspheming the Son.

Tenth, John 14:17, 19 reveals that the world did not behold the Spirit, but it did behold the Son. Hence, Jesus is not the Spirit. If Jesus is the Spirit, how come the Holy Spirit conceived Jesus in the womb of Mary as indicated in Matthew 1:18? Did the Spirit conceive Himself, or did He conceive a separate individual?

DISCOURSE

The Gift of Speaking In Tongues, As Taught And Manifested In The Word Of God, Continued After The Close Of The Apostolic Age And Is In Existence Today

Affirmative: Amy Trees (Foursquare Gospel Church)

Denial: Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba (Church of Christ)

The above proposition is affirmed by Amy Trees (Foursquare Gospel Church) stating that the gift of tongues is still available today. O. Lesley Egharevba (Church of Christ) denies the proposition and insists that the gift of tongues, as taught and manifested in the Bible, ceased at the close of the apostolic age.

Affirmative By Amy Trees

In the beginning, the whole earth had one language and the same words (Gen. 11:1). According to oral tradition, that one language was Hebrew—also known as the tongues of angels. After being saved from the Great Flood, God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth (Gen. 9:1). God repeats the command in Gen. 9:7; "And you, be fruitful and multiply, abound on the earth and multiply in it."

But only two chapters later, we see the world disobey God's command. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth (Gen 11:4).

The Lord responds to their disobedience by coming down to see the city and tower they had built (Gen. 11:5). And the Lord said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech" (Gen. 11:6-7). As punishment for their sin, the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city (Gen. 11:8). Since that day, the world has been cursed by

many languages.

The prophet Isaiah would foretell of a day when, "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." That promise would begin its journey on the Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection.

Acts 2:1-4 says, "When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability."

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷ Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."



The people heard everyone present speaking in foreign languages, but understood what was being said in their own language. It was a divine sign from God that the curse of foreign languages that was imposed at Babel wasn't going to stop the Good News of the God of Israel from being preached around the world.

The Roman Empire paved the way for the gospel to be preached. All roads in the known world led to Rome and there was a relative safety to travel long distances. The gospel spread quickly to faraway lands by word of mouth.

By the time of the birth of Jesus, the Bible had already been translated into Greek—the language spoken by most people. As the church gained power, it tried to control the gospel by keeping it in Latin. But Reformers fought to translate the Bible into the language of the common people—often risking their lives. The power of God won out. In 1383 John Wycliffe translated the Bible into English. Martin Luther translated the Bible to German in 1534. His translation also unified the German language from the tribal German languages that were spoken. And the first French Bible was translated in 1535. Wycliffe Bible Translators was founded in 1917 with the goal of seeing a Bible translation project for every language. By the 20th century, the Bible had been translated into more than 250 languages.

Although the Bible was being translated into the languages of the common people, most people were illiterate. Churches thus began Sunday School programs as a way to teach illiterate people, especially children working in factories, how to read the Bible. The first recorded Sunday School opened in 1751 at Saint Mary's Anglican Church in Nottingham, England. Over 250,000 children began attending Sunday School programs throughout England to

learn how to read God's word.

In 1455, the Gutenberg Printing press was invented enabling the mass production of Bibles at low costs spreading the gospel throughout Europe.

The first newspaper was invented in 1690, paving the way for the Congregational Church (United Church of Christ) printing the first Christian newspaper in 1808.


The motion picture was invented in 1808. Herbert Booth of the Salvation Army claimed to be the first user of film for the cause of Christianity in 1899. Evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson often starred in motion picture news clips in the 1930s for Christian causes.

Radio was invented in 1896. The first Christian radio station hit airwaves by 1921 with Calvary Episcopal Church in Pennsylvania. Evangelist Aimee Semple McPherson started preaching the gospel in Los Angeles on her own radio station in 1924. The powerful radio signal could be heard on stations overseas. Today, there are approximately 1,600 Christian radio stations in the U.S. alone.

Television was invented in 1927. The 700 Club was the first Christian broadcasting network that hit airwaves, founded in 1961 by Baptist minister Pat Robertson. By 2016, the network preached God's word to 138 countries in 39 languages.

Internet was first invented in the 1960s as a way for government researchers to share information. This system became standardized by 1983. Internet was opened to the public in 1993. Today, God's word is spread in many audio, visual and other forms via internet.

Do we believe that the gift of tongues is still in effect today or are we like Babel and believe that these inventions are of man alone without the divine



intervention of God? Did man conceive the great idea of using these technologies to spread the word of God or was it God's plan all along? The gift of tongues continues to this day and we can easily miss it because it doesn't always look exactly like the story of Acts.

In the same way, just because every Christian doesn't have a "Burning Bush" experience like Moses, it doesn't mean God isn't speaking to us. The same is for the gift of tongues.

Hebrews 11 – A Postscript

Hebrews 11 has often been called the roll call of faith—it details what a number of Old Testament characters accomplished by faith. Let's put a little postscript on the end of that chapter to include some New Testament characters.

- By faith Crispus obeyed the gospel of Christ, despite the fact that it cost him his job (Acts 18:8).
- By faith the Ethiopian eunuch insisted that he be baptized immediately (Acts 8:35-39).
- By faith the Christians in Ephesus made a clean break from the past, when they burned the books they had used in their sinful practices, the value of which was 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:18-20).
- By faith many of the Corinthians also repented, when they turned to the Lord and stopped practising such things as fornication, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, stealing, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, and extortion (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
- By faith, Eunice, without the help of a believing husband, raised her child in the training and admonition of the Lord (Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; 3:14-15).

- By faith, Priscilla, working side by side with her believing husband, did much to promote the kingdom of God (Acts 18:2-3, 18, 24-26; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19).

- By faith Peter and John withstood threats against them and continued to boldly preach the gospel of Christ (Acts 4:13-22).

- By faith Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God—in prison, with their feet in stocks, and still suffering from the beating they received earlier in the day (Acts 16:22-25).

- By faith Barnabas sold his land, not to benefit himself, but to meet the urgent needs of others (Acts 4:32-37).

- By faith Dorcas did many good works, especially for widows (Acts 9:36-39).

- By faith Gaius showed hospitality to those who preached, and in so doing became a fellow-worker for the truth (3 John 1:1-8).

- By faith, Philemon, a member of the church at Colosse, showed love for all the saints, and in so doing brought joy and consolation to the hearts of many (Philemon 1:4-7).

- By faith a few in the church at Sardis continued to faithfully serve the Lord, even when most in the congregation did not (Revelation 3:1-6).

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

"And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4).

~ **Bryan Gibson**

DISCOURSE

The Gift of Speaking In Tongues, As Taught And Manifested In The Word Of God, Continued After The Close Of The Apostolic Age And Is In Existence Today

Denial By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba

The above proposition is not true and I shall endeavor to disprove it. When Jesus was speaking to the apostles in Mark 16:17-20, one of the things He promised that they would do is to "speak with new tongues." We see how this was manifested on the day of Pentecost as the apostles miraculously spoke **in languages they never learned** (Acts 2:1-14). This is exactly what we mean by "speaking in tongues" even as we find in other passages of the scriptures (Acts 10:46; I Corinthians 14:27). Speaking in tongues was necessary due to cross-cultural language barrier since the apostles needed to preach the gospel to the whole world (Mark 16:15). Paul made it clear that tongues were a sign for the unbelievers and not to those who believe (I Cor. 14:22). They were supposed to be a help to the unbelievers so that the gospel could be preached to them. And so, speaking in tongues, as taught and manifested in the word of God refers to the miraculous ability of an individual to **speak in a language he has never learnt** and which is unknown to him. It does not refer to the act of translating a message into another language by a multilingual person in which the languages are previously known to the translator. Those who were involved in the translation of the Bible into other languages did not do so miraculously.


Today, many people clam they have this miraculous ability of speaking in tongues. Pentecostal pastors hold strongly to this and insist that they have this gift and can miraculously speak in tongues. For example, the founder of the Foursquare Gospel Church, Mrs. Aimee Semple McPherson claimed that she had this gift. In one of her publications titled "*Questions and Answers Concerning the Baptism of the Holy Ghost*" she

said; "*I myself have received the Holy Ghost and spake in languages I never learned*" (p.488). And on the Foursquare Church website, we find the following statements; "*We believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is an experience that follows salvation...those who experience Holy Spirit baptism today will experience it in the same manner that believers experienced it in the early church; in other words, we believe that they will speak in tongues – languages not known to them*" (Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4). Notice that in both quotations above, the explanation of "speaking in tongues" is speaking in a language **not known to the speaker**. This shows that even the Pentecostals themselves understood what it means to speak in tongues. In fact, Mrs. Aimee McPherson debated Mr. Ben Bogard (one of the greatest Baptist debaters) on miracles and divine healing in 1934 of which tongue speaking is one element of it.

Is the miraculous ability to speak in a language not known to the speaker still in existence today? How valid is the claim of these individuals who insist they can speak in tongues today? Let us examine this with the scriptures.

Scriptural Principles Violated By Modern Day Tongue Speakers

If the gift of tongues is still in existence today, one would expect that the tongue speakers should at least be guided by the scriptural guidelines revealed in the New Testament. But the truth is: certain scriptural principles are violated and ignored by the modern-day tongue speakers and this should baffle sincere people seeking the truth. One of them is that modern-day tongue speakers do not speak in a known human language. If you have ever heard or listened to a



modern day tongue speaker, you would notice that they never speak in a known human language. People who listen to them do not understand what they are saying. This is contrary to Acts 2 for the apostles spoke in languages people listening could clearly understand even as Mrs. Amy Trees admitted in the affirmative article. Another issue is that modern-day tongue speakers speak in tongues for their own sake and not for unbelievers (cf. I Corinthians 14:22). Furthermore, they speak when there is no interpreter. Paul specifically said that a speaker should keep silent if nobody understands his utterance and there is no interpreter (I Cor.14:27-28). Modern-day tongue speakers do not speak in tongues one at a time (cf. I Cor. 14:27) and they allow their women to participate in this exercise (cf. I Cor. 14:34-35). All of these show their disregard for God's word. Even if anyone is able to prove that the gift of tongues is still in existence today, I am willing to affirm that the modern Pentecostal practice of tongue speaking is far from what we see in the New Testament. In the words of my friend, Patrick Donahue, modern-day tongue speaking "is not even a second cousin to the miraculous tongues we read about in the Bible that ceased when the New Testament was completely revealed and put together according to I Cor. 13:8-13."

Tongues Were Supposed To Cease


Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away (I Corinthians 13:8-10).

The above passage teaches that spiritual gifts (including tongues) are to cease when that which is perfect has come. The whole of I Corinthians chapter

12, 13 and 14 all focus on the subject of Spiritual Gifts (12:1). About 9 gifts were mentioned in chapter 12. And in chapter 13 verses 8-10, Paul says that all these gifts will be done away "when that which is perfect is come." What is that perfect thing that would come and at which time the spiritual gifts would be done away? Some think that it means these gifts will pass away when Jesus comes again at the second return. But the grammatical construction will not allow for such interpretation. Paul did not say "when He who is perfect has come" but he said when "that which is perfect has come." One cannot correctly speak of Jesus as "that which." And so, that which is perfect is the completion of the New Testament scriptures which is referred to as the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25) and it is the perfect, complete, and final revelation of God to man (2 Tim.3:16-17).

Prophecy and knowledge was "in part" at that time when Paul was writing. The New Testament was "in part" and Paul said in verse 9 that they knew "in part," and prophesied "in part," but when that which is perfect is come then that which is in part shall be done away. Inasmuch as the Bible was in process of formation, up until the very last word in the Bible was written, they only had the truth "in part." But when the New Testament was completed they had the perfect thing, the perfect law of liberty, and then inspiration, prophecy, tongues, and all other miracles were done away. Only three things were to remain (faith, hope and love). If anyone is having any other thing apart from these three, such is adding to the list of things that Paul said would remain.

Finally, Mrs. Amy says that "just because every Christian doesn't have a "Burning Bush" experience like Moses, it doesn't mean God isn't speaking to us." But I believe the scriptures tell us HOW God speaks to us today. In Hebrews 1:1, the writer states clearly



that God spoke in time past to the fathers through the prophets but has in these last days spoken to us through His son. God has spoken through His son. More than once, He commanded us to "listen to Him" (Matthew 3:17; 17:7). His son Jesus had sent the Holy Spirit to guide the men who put down the New Testament for us. Therefore, any time we need to hear from God on any subject, all we have to do is simply to read His Word, the Bible. We do not need to have the burning bush experience or a direct encounter with Him like those of old. We are simply to abide by His doctrine (II John 9).

Those "Strange People"

Years ago I shared a seat on the train with a "missionary" returning from work in Alaska. He told me he met some "strange people" up there who thought they could work out their own salvation.

I said, "With fear and trembling; Philippians 2:12."

"No, No!" he said. "I mean they thought they could save themselves."

And I said, "From this untoward generation; Acts 2:40."

This was just too much for the old gentleman; and he sighed, and said he guessed I must be one of those folk. Well, I never did discover whether I was or was not; but I did try to make my point that there was nothing wrong in a faith that could be "spelled out" by the word of God.

It is common to hear preachers boldly assert that "the gospel of Christ must be believed – it cannot be obeyed!!!" I just recall that Paul said the Lord was coming "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thessalonians 1:8). When I hear someone say, "A child of God cannot fall from grace" I remember that Paul told the Galatians who

sought justification by the law, "ye are fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). Reminds me of the fellow in the jail cell who shouts at the jailer, "You can't do this to me!"

I know that sinners cannot "save themselves" apart from the Lord; but there must be some way in which this admonition properly applies, or it would not be in God's word. The facts of the gospel can only be believed, but there must be commands of the gospel, which must be obeyed, or this responsibility would not be placed upon us. It is foolish to contend that Christians cannot fall from grace when Paul says some had done so. By the same token, there must be some sense in which we are saved by faith -- for in various ways the Bible says this is so. (Romans 5:1) But it doesn't say "faith only" -- and so we have no right to say so. If there were not some sense in which baptism washes away sins, the Bible would not tell us that it does. (Acts 22:16) Ignoring God's word won't change it.

How wonderful it would be if we all had enough confidence in the word of God to accept it just as God gave it; neither "explaining away" the statements we do not like, nor acting as though they didn't exist. The New Testament relates salvation to 18 or 20 different things. We are saved by grace, faith, works, baptism, hope, -and so, on and on. There is no "only" attached to any of these things. It would seem that common "horse" sense would tell us that they are all necessary ingredients -- fitting perfectly into the divine pattern, each in its place. No "doctrine" that denies any of these matters, or places emphasis upon one to the hurt of another, could possibly be God's truth.

Folk who respect the word of God just "face-up" to its statements and accept them. If this makes "strange people" -- then so be it.

- By Robert F. Turner

TESTIMONIALS

What People Say About Unmasking Sophistry Magazine

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

I am so impressed by your bulletin (Unmasking Sophistry) and the depth of the articles and the willingness to debate with those who teach error. How wonderful it is to know that the true gospel of Christ is being declared in Nigeria.

- **Roberts, T.M. | Texas, USA**

I was impressed by Unmasking Sophistry. I usually don't look at unsolicited emails with attachments, but I made an exception for this one. It was well done.

- **Hamilton, J. | Nebraska, USA**

Thank you for sending me these three issues. I'm not sure how I got on your mailing list, but please continue to send these to me. I appreciate the work you're doing with this. It's encouraging to see brethren around the world standing for the truth and spreading the gospel.

- **Sochor, A. | Kentucky, USA**

I was finally able to download your unmasking sophistry. And Wow! This is beyond impressive. You should put this all together and make a book. This will sell across the brotherhood in churches of Christ around the world! You are very knowledgeable and address points that many people have questions about.

- **Goodale, C.M. | Florida, USA**

I am so grateful receiving reading materials like this. This will be very grateful in my preaching work, please continue to include me in your mailing list. May God bless and May our efforts and yours bring honor and glory to the Father in heaven.

In Christian Love,

- **Valoroso, A. | Philippines**

Brother Lesley: I have looked over some parts of Unmasking Sophistry. The articles seem Scriptural and job well done by you as the editor and the authors of the many articles. Keep up the good work!!!

- **Rodriguez, M.A. | Texas, USA**

Thank you for spreading this wealth of good Bible teaching. May God bless your endeavors so that many souls will be saved in heaven.

- **Halbrook, R. | Alaska, USA**



I looked over Unmasking Sophistry, vol. 1 and 2. It seems you have done a wonderful job in creating an online journal. I like the way it is constructed. As I looked over the contents and departments, I think you have created departments that will be beneficial for anyone who reads them. Keep up the good work.

- **Leslie, T. | Tennessee, USA**

Kudos to you on your Unmasking Sophistry journal. Your debate with Victor Ayeni on the necessity of baptism was my most informative takeaway in that journal. For a moment, I almost believed Victor Ayeni. But like you said, the word cannot mean spirit and truth at the same time.

- **Omoyele, D. | Ekiti, Nigeria**

That magazine production is classic. With that publication, you have announced your ministry from a high pedestal. Only people with enormous resources undertake such project, yet, you did with little resources. You are blessed through God's grace to advance the cause of Christ.

- **Gbamis, R. | Ontario, Canada**

A glance through looks really inviting. Thanks for the effort and good work Sir. More strength to do the Master's will

- **Idehen, O. (SoldOut) | Edo, Nigeria**

The articles were very good. The focus is on a verity of things which I liked. God bless you in this effort.

- **Warfel, R. | Nebraska, USA**

Thank you so much for this. I almost deleted it without opening for fear of a virus, but downloaded and scanned it. I am so thankful I did. What a blessing you are offering. Again, thank you for your diligent work. In Him,

- **Arrowood, W. | Louisiana, USA**

In this day and age, it is extremely difficult to find material that holds fast to what the Bible teaches. Unmasking Sophistry Magazine is a reflection of the wisdom, understanding and knowledge that can only come from the word of God. May God continue to bless this ministry and all those who labor in order to make this publication possible.

- **Green, D.M. | Washington, USA**


I am so glad to inform you beloved brother for sharing me with this journal articles "Unmasking Sophistry" wherein truly a great help for me to do the labor in the vineyard of the Lord. I hope that these articles are useful in spreading God's Word as well as edifying one another. Thank you very much brother. I thank God for given me this opportunity to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. To God be the glory! I fervently pray for your good health and your family. May God richly bless you. Keep up the good work you are doing for the Lord.

- **Bullanday, P. | Ilocos Norte Philippine**

QUIBBLES THAT BACKFIRED

This section tagged "Quibbles that Backfired" deals with interesting statements and arguments that have been made by people during discussions by way of defense in attempts to justify and sustain their position regarding the subject involved. Some of these quibbles backfired in that the termination of it showed the complete incongruity of the statement made. Others backfired because they reverted upon the person who made them and put him in the very same predicament in which he intended to put the other fellow.

In a California meeting, a young man approached Brother Marshall Keeble and said, "You have talked about every other church except mine." Keeble said, "I don't know what church you are a member of." The young man replied, "the Latter Day Saints." "You're too late!" Keeble shot back (too late to be the New Testament church). The next night the young man was baptized!



W. Curtis Porter met E. Z. Newsome in a debate in Bernie, Missouri, in 1935. Discussing the matter of falling from grace, Newsome said that if the devil can get one child of God, he can get them all. If he does not get them all, it is his fault. And if any man is ever saved, then he is saved by the grace of the devil. The devil could have gotten him, but he did not, and just because the devil did not want him, he let him go on to heaven, and therefore the man could praise the devil throughout eternity because the devil could have gotten him, but did not. Porter turned the thing around and handed him the other end of it. Porter said, "Upon the basis of that, if the Lord can get one of the devil's children, He can get them all. Certainly the Lord is stronger than the devil. On that basis, if God can get one, He can get them all, and if He does not get them, it is because of the meanness of God. And if any man goes to hell, he goes there because God was too mean to save him. And he can therefore curse God throughout eternity because God could have had him, but would not."

During one of his debates with Curtis Porter, Ben Bogard made a "parallel" illustration to Mark 16:16 in an attempt to prove that baptism is not essential to salvation. In this verse, Jesus said; "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." And Bogard made this illustration; "He that boards the train and sits down shall go to Little Rock." Bogard said "if I board the train, I can go to Little Rock whether I sit down or not. That may add to my comfort." And so, going to Little Rock he makes parallel to salvation, sitting down parallel to baptism, and boarding the train parallel to faith. He claims that the essential thing to go to Little Rock is to board the train. You will get there whether you sit down or not; the essential thing to salvation is to believe. Baptism may add to your comfort, but you will get there whether you are baptized or not. In response, Porter said, "Well, he makes baptism parallel to sitting down, belief parallel to boarding the train, and since a man can go to Little Rock without sitting down, then he can reach salvation without baptism, which makes baptism nonessential. On that same basis, it makes FAITH non-essential because Mr. Bogard, did it ever occur to you that I can go to Little Rock without ever boarding a train? And besides all of that, that doesn't very well fit your doctrine, because to be parallel with you, it would have to say, 'He that boards the train is already in Little Rock before he has time to sit down.'"

CHURCH HISTORY

The Great Awakening

Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

Various religious movements have emerged and still emerging in the world today. They all have various ideas and themes that they champion. Their aim could be good and intelligent. But no matter the level of their zeal, their efforts will only be in vain if they teach and practice things contrary to what is taught in the Bible.

Introduction

The Great Awakening was a movement which started between the 1730s and 1740s. Around this time, passion for religion started to wax cold. As a counter to this trend, the Great Awakening gave listeners a sense of personal guilt and the need for salvation through a series of preaching. This Great Awakening was characterized by large revivals led by protestant ministers, which led to increase in membership and formation of new religious movement.

The First Great Awakening

Decline in religious involvement due to religious experience becoming more formal and less personal, led to many craving for revival. Jonathan Edwards (an Anglican Minister considered to be one of the chief founding fathers of the Great Awakening) centered his message on the fact that humans were sinners and he also preached justification by faith alone. In 1741, Edward's sermon, "Sinners In The Hands Of An Angry God" became famous and news of it spread rapidly and his sermon was frequently reprinted.

George Whitefield also had significant impact on the Great Awakening as he embarked on a series of journeys in which he went preaching from colony to colony. A wide spread revival was seen during his journey in 1739 – 1741. As he toured the colonies, he would preach to large crowds in the open air. Whitefield's influence reportedly led to the revival of a once dimming Christian faith. Other people who led the Great Awakening include but not limited to

the following; David Brainerd, Theodore Frelinghuysen, Gilbert Tennent, Samuel Davies, etc. Not everyone bought the ideas of the Great Awakening, with others favoring the traditional, formal style of worship. In 1742, there was debate and division in England clergy over the Great Awakening; those who favoured the old-fashioned traditional ways were called "Old Lights," while those who embraced the Great Awakening were called "New Lights."

Teachings During The Great Awakening Versus What The Scriptures Teach

The Great Awakening brought various philosophies, ideas and doctrines to the forefront of Christian faith, some of which are offshoot of Calvinism and are in obvious contradiction to what the Bible teaches. For example, one of the major ideas during this period was that all people are born sinners. This is something the Bible does not teach but sadly, it is often propagated by almost all the denominations of the world today. The Bible teaches that sin is committed and not inherited (I John 3:4). We do not become sinners because our parents were sinners but we become sinners when we commit sin.

Another teaching during the movement was that all people can be saved if they confess their sins to God, seek forgiveness and accept God's grace. But the scriptures teach that people can only be saved if they will believe, repent, confess and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of their sins – Mark 16:16; Acts



2:38; Romans 10:9-10. For several years, many have tried to dismiss the relevance of baptism with reference to the salvation of man but the truth is that the scriptures teach that baptism saves us (I Peter 3:21) and that baptism puts us into Christ (Galatians 3:27). God is praised for the few people who understand this divine truth.

Another popular idea during the Great Awakening was that religion should not be formal and institutionalized, but rather casual and personal. This sounds like regardless of where and how anyone worships God, it really does not matter. In other words, one could worship God as a Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Jehovah's Witness, etc. it does not matter. Besides, the religious leaders during this movement were from different religious backgrounds and belong to different denominations. But the truth is, we cannot be united in diversity. We cannot serve God acceptably when we are divided – belong to different denominations and hold various conflicting doctrines. Denominationalism (division) is condemned in God's Word (I Corinthians 1:10-13). What Christ prayed for is for all His disciples to be ONE (in doctrine, practice, etc. – John 17:21; Ephesians 4:3-6).

Conclusion

Various religious movements have emerged and still emerging in the world today. They all have various ideas and themes that they champion. Their aim could be good and intelligent. But no matter the level of their zeal, their efforts will only be in vain if;

- (1) They teach and practice things contrary to what is taught in the Bible (II John 9; Matthew 15:8-9);
- (2) They do not recognize that Christ built only one church (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4).

(3) They do not recognize the ONE church built by Christ as the only authorized institution saddled with the responsibility of preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ.

In order to avoid being zealously religious without God, we must learn to do things in God's way (Romans 10:1-3) and take our own ideas completely away from it.

The New School Prayer

Now I sit me down in school
Where praying is against the rule.
For this great nation under God
Finds mention of Him very odd.

If Scripture now the class recites,
It violates the Bill of Rights.
And anytime my head I bow
Becomes a federal matter now.

Our hair can be purple or orange or green,
That's no offense, it's the freedom scene.
The law is specific, the law is precise,
Prayers spoken aloud are a serious vice.

For praying in a public hall
Might offend someone with no faith at all.
In silence alone we must meditate,
God's name is prohibited by the State.

We're allowed to cuss & dress like freaks,
And pierce our noses, tongues & cheeks.
They've outlawed guns; but FIRST the Bible.
To quote the Good Book makes me liable.

continued on pg. 36

INSTITUTIONALISM



The Blessings of Autonomy

Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

One characteristic of the Lord's Church that makes it different from most churches of men is autonomy. Autonomous local churches are not linked together in or through some larger organized structure.

What Is Autonomy?

The word autonomy is not used in the New Testament, but the concept is certainly discussed. Autonomy simply means self-governance. In the case of the local church, autonomy means that a congregation is not overseen or governed by a denominational body, human institution, or larger congregation.

However, in the case of the local church, autonomy does not mean that churches have legislative authority. In other words, making or enforcing man-made commands is wrong, regardless of the fact that the rules may have been made by an autonomous congregation. Jesus condemned the Pharisees for "teaching as doctrines the precepts of men" (Matthew 15:9). We can be condemned for the same thing today. The fact that a whole congregation may endorse a man-made command does not change this.

Local church autonomy simply means that a congregation governs itself according to the instructions revealed in the New Testament.

Local Churches Are to Be Autonomous

There are several indications given in the New Testament that show that the Lord's design for the church is that congregations are to be autonomous:

- **There is no organization in the New Testament larger than the local church** – Nothing is said in the history recorded in the book of Acts or the instructions given in the epistles that reveal anything about a larger structure or hierarchy beyond what was

revealed about the local church.

- **Elders were appointed in local churches** – As they returned from their first preaching tour, Paul and Barnabas "*appointed elders for them in every church*" (Acts 14:23). This indicates that these were churches before and after having elders. Having elders does not make a congregation autonomous. It is inherently autonomous by design.

- **Elders would oversee the flock among them** – Peter instructed elders, "*Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God*" (1 Peter 5:2). The elders would not oversee the flocks (churches) in other places.

- **Churches made their own decisions** – When Paul wrote to the church in Corinth about their contribution for the needy saints in Jerusalem, he said, "*When I arrive whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem*" (1 Corinthians 16:3). The church in Corinth would decide for themselves who would take the funds they collected to Jerusalem. They had control of those resources and would decide where they would go. Even an apostle (like Paul) did not have the authority to rule over another church. The local church would determine this themselves.

Blessings of Autonomy

Why would the Lord design His church so that local congregations would be autonomous? We cannot



know every possible reason if they have not been revealed in His word; but there are certain blessings that we can see in this arrangement.

First, autonomy helps prevent the spread of error –

Paul warned the brethren in Corinth, "*A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough*" (1 Corinthians 5:6). He was simply talking about a local church in that verse and the influence of sin within a congregation. However, we know that sin and error are progressive (2 Timothy 3:13) and could infect the church from within or from the outside (Acts 20:29-30). Without autonomy, these two avenues may be merged, allowing error to spread more efficiently. Autonomy is a buffer to protect a local church from others that have gone into apostasy. When the Lord addressed the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 2-3), five of them had issues that needed to be corrected; but no issue affected all of them. They were all local problems.

Second, autonomy allows churches to work more effectively –

In many spheres in life, there is a temptation to think that a bigger program is necessarily a better program. In this country, we have seen power shift from local and state governments to the federal government with the hope that the programs operated by these authorities will be carried out more effectively. Yet a larger bureaucracy does not always mean that work will be done better. In fact, the opposite is often true. The wise man wrote about this: "*If you see oppression of the poor and denial of justice and righteousness in the province, do not be shocked at the sight; for one official watches over another official, and there are higher officials over them*" (Ecclesiastes 5:8). Regardless of the intentions, large bureaucracies become bloated and ineffective. Autonomous churches are not dependent upon the decisions or approval of others or upon the organizations that

others have created. Congregations are only dependent upon the instructions given in the New Testament (cf. 2 Timothy 1:13). Provided that the work being done by a local church is lawful, brethren are free to do what is most expedient (1 Corinthians 10:23).

Third, autonomy encourages local work –

There is a way for churches to be involved in works in other locations. They may engage in evangelism by supporting preachers elsewhere (2 Corinthians 11:8) or by sending men out to preach (Acts 13:1-3). They could be involved in benevolence by sending aid to elders in churches where brethren have been affected by severe hardship (Acts 11:29-30). Even in these circumstances, decisions to be involved and where funds will be directed are made by the local church providing the funds. With a "sponsoring church arrangement," there is no involvement from a congregation besides funneling money. Besides the fact that this type of arrangement is unauthorized, it can also give the impression that sending money to a "sponsoring church" exempts a congregation from working itself. The Lord expects for local churches to be working. The church in Thessalonica was commended because they were busy spreading the gospel (1 Thessalonians 1:8). The local church is "*the pillar and support of the truth*" (1 Timothy 3:15) and, therefore, must be a light and a positive influence locally.

Conclusion

Local church autonomy protects against error, allows work to be done efficiently, and encourages local work. Autonomy means that no matter what other churches around us might do, we can stand for the truth and do the Lord's work. Let us continue to do the Lord's work, remembering that our allegiance is to Christ, not to other churches.

BARBS WITH A POINT

A Glorious Tongue

Rowland Femi Gbamis | Ontario, Canada

Even so, the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature; it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so (James 3:5-10 NKJV).

Introduction

The tongue perfectly exemplifies the saying that big things come in small packages. Like the helm of a ship, the tongue, though looking so small and insignificant, actually wields more power than all the other parts of the body put together. Physiologically, the place of the tongue in the human body cannot be taken for granted. Speech is made possible only by this little organ. Just imagine a home, church, neighbourhood, community, nation or world of tongue-less people? You will undoubtedly agree that communication would be generally burdensome and largely limited. Added to this is that the tongue is the only organ of taste in the body. Only by it can we differentiate what is sweet or tasty from bitter or harmful. It also helps immensely in the digestion process of food substances in the body.

Moreover, let us look at the tongue from the spiritual realm; the tongue performs even more significant roles. James 3:9 says, "With it, we bless our God and Father, and with it, we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God." This verse brings to light the diverse possibilities of the tongue. It says it

can be used both positively and negatively. Indeed, the tongue can be an instrument of tremendous good or catastrophic destruction. It can be used to build people up in the faith or destroy their hard-earned reputations. It can help bring about peace among friends, families, and nations or start a war. Also, it can be an instrument for good in a local church or can destroy the work of God. Therefore, in this lesson, emphasis will be laid on the positive use of the tongue. There are several ways the tongue can be used to the glory of God and be a source of blessing to humanity.

Glorification Of God's Name

One of the purposes for which God created our tongues is to continue to show forth His glory through the positive usage of the organ. Unfortunately, that is not to be, as we channel our strength in deriding and castigating each other in ways that do not glorify the Lord because of our selfish motives and self-glorification (1Tim. 6:3-5). God designed our tongue to extol Him at all times because "in Him we live, move and have our being" (Psalm 66:16-17; Acts 17:28). Hence, the reason for which we continue to praise God is because of His loving-kindness and tender mercies toward us at all times (Psalm 103:1-4). Equally important, Apostle Peter notes in his epistle, "...that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1 Pet. 2:9). In other words, God's children can never exhaust praising the Creator. If that is true, and yes, it is true! The question remains, why spend so much time dwelling on the negativity instead of building up positively with our tongues? This question is best answered when we realize the inherent power in praising God's Holy Name with our tongues.

First, praises glorify and gladden God and usher us as Christians into the presence of the Lord (Psalm 50:23; 96:8; 100:4). Second, through praise, souls can be won to the kingdom of God, and the value of a single soul cannot be quantified. In Acts 16:25-34, we see how the Philippian Jailer and his household were saved after the Roman authority had imprisoned Paul and Silas. The Bible says, "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly, there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were loosed" (25-26). In other words, praise moves God to intervene in dare difficult situations in our lives. It can break every prison door in our lives and set us free from every diabolical bondage. To the Philippians, Paul would say, "rejoice in the Lord always and again I will say, rejoice!" (4:4).

Third, intrinsic to praising God's Holy Name is that when we extol the majesty of God, the adversaries are going to be wholly mortified and subdued (2Chr.20:20-30, Emp. 20-22).

Fouth, as we praise God, we gladden His heart to release untold blessings into our lives through our obedience (Col. 3:16-17). May we continue to show forth His glory through the positive usage of our tongues in praising God because it makes us better, happier and fulfilled individuals due to the inner comfort, peace and joy that floods our hearts when we praise God. Indeed, praise is comely. God demands it, which accounts for one of the reasons God created us with a mouth (Isa.43:21. cf 1Pt.2:9). Would you now make up your mind to begin to use your tongue to glorify God?

Call To Action

Evangelization Of Lost Souls: Telling others about

the love of God is one of the most important uses of the tongue. From implicit inference, if there is any reason God gave the tongue, then it is to speak to the dying world around us about the love of the Saviour who gave His life for our sins. Like the psalmist, we too can say, "My tongue shall speak of thy word..."(Psalm 119:172). Isaiah says, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*" (Isaiah 61:1). Apostle Paul would say, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith" (Romans. 1:16-17). In other words, we need to be deliberate in using our tongue to proclaim the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ. In place of gossips in the office, neighbourhood, marketplace, and school, let us transform our tongues into one that will turn individuals and multitudes from the way of destruction and death into the paths of righteousness and eternal life.

Edification Of Fellow Believers: As much as we can use our tongues to tell others about the Saviour's love, we can also use it to edify fellow believers. To "edify" is to strengthen, build up or establish; it is to instruct and develop, especially in spiritual matters with God's word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Paul says to the Colossians, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom" (3:16). In Colossian 4:6, he says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man". It therefore means that we will not make any utterance, reference or insinuation that could defile, mislead,

embitter, agitate or incite another Christian. It means the thoughtful words of our little members can be such that stir up others to love and serve God more. Correspondingly, Paul admonished the Ephesians, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph.4:29). Hence, let us use our tongue to strengthen and build up, not weaken and pull down!

Encouragement To Others: To encourage is to inspire with courage, spirit and hope. It is an attempt to urge, spur on and stimulate others to good works. Since our words have the potency to cause an already stumbling Christian to fall entirely or strengthen him, we should therefore determine to speak only words that bring encouragement to others (Heb.12:12-13). The word that comes out of our tongues can make people feel loved, appreciated and wanted (Gen.50:21; Ruth 2:10-13). It brings relief to a distressed soul and soothes a heart that is aggrieved (Prov.15:4, 25:15). A gracious tongue speaks hope to those going through adversity in life (cf. Job 4:4). It causes anger and wrath to be dissolved (Prov.15:1). Peace and harmony are fostered in the home, church, neighbourhood, office, and the nation as a whole due to good use of our tongues (Eph.4:29). Also, it brings healing to an ailing body and mind (Prov.12:18). Isaiah says, "The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary" (50:4). In other words, the ability to know how to speak a word in season is a grace that God's children need to ask from God.

Expression Of Our Heart's Desires: The positive use of the tongue is not just for the good of those around us; they are for our benefit too! To the Philippians, Paul says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let

your requests be made known to God" (4:6). Is it not cheering to know that our tiny tongue can be used to express all of our heart desires to God? That little member can communicate with Him in ways no other part of our body can. So, do not just keep quiet with the assumption that since God knows all our needs, He should automatically meet them. No! It does not work that way! God has given us a tongue to express our desires. Let us ask Him our needs. Jesus says, "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matt.7:7).

Call To Salvation

Perhaps you have not surrendered your life to God, now is the time to demonstrate your faith in Him through the good use of your tongue by confessing that Jesus Christ is the son of God and you would be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 8:36-39.) After that, the grace to use your tongue for the glory of God will be bestowed on you. In contrast, if you have given your life to Christ, but you are still exhibiting the works of the flesh by using your tongue to glorify the devil, then you are not wise (Prov.10:18). You need to repent! Remember, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit" (Prov.18:21).

Conclusion

The positive use of the tongue cannot be overemphasized. A tree must be suitable for its fruits to be good (Matt.12:33). However, it takes the grace of God before such can be made possible because the heart that has not got the touch of God cannot bring forth good deeds through the tongue. Many around us have been battered with psychological, emotional, and physiological problems that most of the time do not need any medical treatment. What they need is the soothing words of grace and comfort from a willing vessel. We can be that vessel that God has been seeking for today.

IDEAL HOME

Home Training

Samuel C. Omaka | Oyo, Nigeria

The home is an institution of God... Like every relationship, the home comes with many responsibilities and one of the most important responsibility is to train those born into that home.

Chaos all around! Killings a daily thing! In our time and age, we have a society filled with more unbelievers in God. The moral state of our society has decayed and is rotten! Our children openly support abominations like lesbianism and gay marriages. The government keeps getting more corrupt. The Lord's church keeps dwindling in attendance as many of our children are abandoning the faith. To stand for the truth is now considered shameful in a society where crimes and sins are celebrated. This state of societal decadence, to a great degree, can be traced to failure in home training. The sacred writ still instructs fathers and mothers today to "Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it." (Prov.22:16).

The home is an institution of God, and it is established as a result of the marriage relationship. God joined the first man and the first woman in marriage, thus establishing the first home we find in the Scripture (Genesis 2:21-25). Like every relationship, the home comes with many responsibilities and one of the most important responsibilities of the home is to train those born into that home. Training is an act, process, or method through which knowledge, skills, and experience are acquired.

The Importance of Home Training

The importance of home training cannot be overemphasized. God Himself who instituted marriage commands fathers in respect to their children to "...bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." The scripture further warns

that, "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother" (Prov.29:15). We must understand that discipline in the home, especially punitive discipline when necessary, is a part of home training and parental love for their children. This, of course, must be measured according to the offense committed. Hear these words: "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Proverbs 13:24). Proverbs 19:18 says, "Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction."

The above passages highlight the importance of home training more than anything I can say. Training in the home is a command of God. When a child is left untrained, he brings disgrace to his family, to society, to himself, and most agonizingly, to the church of God.

Who Is to Carry Out Home Training?

To a great degree, parents (and to some extent grandparents) play a major role in their children's life and upbringing — most especially during infancy, childhood, and adolescence. As a matter of fact, this is the time to teach them about God, His Word, His Son, and the uniqueness and singularity of His church. This is the time to teach them devotion to their Creator. This is the time to teach them how to be responsible and respectful individuals.

Sadly, parents of our generation have relinquished the training of their children to schools and nannies. They have no time for their children. Children as young as two years of age spend more time outside the home



than they spend with their parents. They learn more from the outside world than at home. This is because parental priorities are misplaced. These parents, having no time to teach their children, continue to deceive themselves, thinking they are bringing up godly children when in reality the godless and decaying society is the one doing the training. How naive to think that a few hours of Sunday services is enough to erase the corrupt doctrine about God, His Son, His church, and His creation being taught to these children five days a week?

Those aiming to be parents must therefore be prepared mentally, physically, and spiritually to face the important task of training their children. This is a difficult task, producing joy and pain at the same time. It demands the utmost sacrifice!

God, who is the giver of children, commands the fathers to "bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). Training of children must be a joint effort of the father and mother. The father as the head of the family must understand that he is expected to lead in training his children while the mother is supportive in their training of children. However you view it, the truth is that when parents put forth genuine effort, create enough time, diligently teach the right thing by word and deed, make their children to see God, His kingdom, and righteousness as the first thing to seek for in life, and provide adequate parental supervision during the child's infancy, childhood, and adolescence, it will go a long way in shaping that child to be loving and devoted toward God. He will be a great joy to his parents. Parents who are only concerned about the academic and sports achievements of their children while neglecting the weightier matter—teaching them the Bible, have in fact failed God and placed the salvation of their

children's soul in danger! Parents have to see that the proper training of their children is their primary responsibility.

How to Carry Out Home Training

In carrying out a successful home training, parents must first understand that they are God's stewards in training of children. God Himself is the owner of children. When parents decide to welcome a child into the world, they are indirectly telling God that they are ready to train the child to His glory.

Consider what the psalmist said: "Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward" (127:3). Having understood that children are owned by God, parents are charged with the task of bringing these children up in the way of the Lord who owns them, and we shall give account of our stewardship in this regard before God. In training our children, we must follow the advice of the psalmist: "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth" (127:4).

An arrow must be directed towards a single target. Careful calculations must be made and careful steps must be taken in order to successfully launch it and strike the aimed target. Children must be launched toward a single target—heaven — and every effort we make in their training must be to return them to God who gave them. God, who has given us the task of training children, did not leave us without the tools to accomplish this task. In Ephesians 6:4, He commands parents to "... *bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.*" Parents do this by diligently showing their children from infancy the importance of studying God's word, being at every service of God, being punctual to those services and most importantly, creating time each day to have a discussion about the Word of God. This implies that parents themselves be devoted to the study of God's



Word in order to actually know what to teach their children in God's Word.

Consequences for Failure in Home Training

Failure in the aspect of home training is of a grave consequence. So many young people's lives have been altered forever due to negligence in home training. There are many consequences attached to failure in home training and these include but not limited to the following:

A Soul Is Lost: God has bestowed on parents the responsibility of nursing their children. Failure to train our children properly means that we have inadvertently placed their souls in danger. Although money, fame, and power seem to be the most coveted things in this physical world, Jesus outlined the importance of the soul when He asked, "*For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Matthew 16:26).

It Brings Shame To The Family: Proverbs 29:15 emphasizes this point when it says, "*The rod and rebuke give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.*"

It Produces Mayhem In the Community: When a child is not properly trained, the child may grow up to become a thief, rapist, drug addict, murderer, fraud, bad leader, etc., thereby contributing to the decadence of our society. The *Boko Haram* terrorizing Nigeria are products of failed homes. The bandits and kidnappers are products of failed homes. The fraudsters, internet scammers, criminals, hoodlums, etc., are products of failed homes. If we want to make a better society, we must recognize that it starts with giving our children proper home training in line with God's Word.

The Church Loses A Member: When a child is lost due to lack of proper home training, the church also suffers. A church without children is a church without a future. You show your contribution to the future of the church by being diligent in training up your child in the "*nurture*" and "*admonition*" of the Lord.

What Will Our Children Remember About Home?

Will they remember...

That their father and mother loved each other and were kind to each other?

That home was a happy place of peace and rest, and was respected and revered by the law of love?

That each child was treated fairly, deeply loved, and required to obey both parents?

That there was an encouragement for each one to do his best, but no embarrassment was placed on us when we tried, but failed?

That although father and mother worked hard every day, they still took time each day to read the Bible and pray?

That each of us children had certain works to be done, and were held accountable that each job was completed on time?

That honesty was essential, and that cheating, lying, or any deceit would be met with fair punishment?

That Sunday was a happy day looking forward to, as a day when everyone went to Bible study and worship without question?

That home was a place where friends and friendship were dear, but where truth and righteousness were dearer?

These are the things that make home dear. For some, it may seem too late. For some it may be that the children's remembrances of home may yet be changed—for the better.

What will our children remember about home?

- —adapted from Iowa Park, TX church, *The Encourager*

MYTH BUSTER

Myths Often Told About The Birth Of Christ

Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

In Matthew chapter 2, we read of the birth of Jesus Christ. This birth has been prophesied in the Old Testament. However, there are certain widely held but false beliefs often told by people concerning the birth of Jesus. The aim of this writing is to examine some of them.

When Was Jesus Born?

Contrary to popular belief, Jesus was not born on the 25th of December. No one really knows exactly when Jesus was born. The Orthodox tradition celebrates the birth of Christ on January 7, which is December 25 on the old Julian calendar. Regardless of different speculations, the date of Christ's birth is not stated in the gospels or any historical reference.

The Wise Men

In Matthew chapter 2 verse 1, we read of wise men from the east who came to see Jesus, "*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying,*" (NHEB).

This biblical story is known amongst Christians and non-Christians alike; however there are also some myths arising from this passage which have no root in the scriptures. Let us examine the facts;

Who Were They? The original word for "wise men" here is "magos" which has a wide range of applications including but not limited to philosopher, priests, or astronomers. Whatever their specified profession was, it was one that required great wisdom, and hence the term "wise men" is a befitting transliteration. Whether or not they are kings, the Bible is silent.

Where Were They From? The Bible only states that they were from the "East." It is very likely that they

were either from Persia or Arabia, as both countries might be referred to as East, that is, east of Judea.

How Many Were They? The term "three wise men" is popular, however, this is because it is assumed that since there were three gifts presented, then the number of person were three. The Bible does not mention any specific number of persons and so mentioning any number is nothing but speculation.

What Gifts Did They Bring? The Bible records that they carried gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These gifts had significant value during this time and were befitting of a king.

When Did They Come To Visit Jesus? The belief that the wise men came to visit Jesus when He was just born is popular. However, the wise men, when they arrived in Jerusalem, talked about Jesus' birth as already having occurred (Matthew 2:2).

Three times in the account, Matthew describes Jesus as "the young child." The Greek word used is paidion, which usually describes a child past nursing age. He could have used nepios, which more specifically describes a newborn baby (translated "nursing infants" in Matthew 21:16). Matthew describes the wise men visiting Mary and the "young child" at "the house."

Also, we find that King Herod "put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men" (Matthew 2:16).

Conclusion

Hopefully, the realization that a simple passage of the Bible such as this could have so many widely believed myths will spur us to critical Bible study.

SALVATION

**Does The Holy Spirit Exercise A Power Or Influence In Addition To The Written Or Spoken Word
In The Conviction And Conversion Of Sinners?**

David Olajire | Lagos, Nigeria

Truly, Jesus said the Holy Spirit will come to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment but the Bible makes it clear that the Holy Spirit does these through the Word

The "I" in the Calvinist acronym (TULIP) stands for Irresistible Grace and it means that those who have been predestined for salvation will be saved by force, even against their will, because the Holy Spirit will work in a supernatural way, apart from preaching of the Word and even without preaching, to save them. Those who hold to the doctrine of Irresistible Grace believe that the Holy Spirit must work separately, and apart from the Bible to convict and convert a sinner, and that without the Holy Spirit working directly on the individual, it will be impossible for anyone to be convicted and converted. But the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit works through the Word. It convicts and converts through the word and He does not work separately, apart from the word.

Often, some recount they have had a direct operation of the Spirit before their conversion. Such persons should know that such experience is an emotional experience and not an operation of the Holy Spirit. Such experience is no proof that one is converted. In conversion, the Holy Spirit does not operate independently of the Word on the sinner's heart by a direct impact. None, in the Bible had such experience. Some may allude to Cornelius to prove such experience exist, but let it be known that even after the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius, he was not saved. It was the Word preached that convicted him. The Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius to convince the brethren that God has accepted the Gentiles into the fold (Acts 10:44-48, Acts 11:15-18).

The word is the seed that must be planted (Luke 8:11). A soil without seed cannot by itself produce crops.

The heart is the soil (Luke 8:15) and it cannot produce faith without the Word. No wonder the Bible says faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus never said some refused to accept the word because the Spirit did not work on them but they refused to accept because of other reasons. The argument is not about the Spirit working but about how the Spirit works. In fact, the work of conversion is done by the Spirit but the Spirit does this only through the Word (1 Pet. 1:22-23). The Word is called the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17); and just like a warrior conquers with his sword, the Holy Spirit conquers with the Word (Acts 11:14).

Interestingly, in all cases of conversion in the Bible, the Holy Spirit worked only through the Word. There is no single case of conversion in the Bible where the Holy Spirit worked separately and apart from the Word. In Acts 2, Peter preached to them and they were convicted and converted because of the Word they heard (Acts 2:40). In fact, this passage nullifies the teaching of irresistible grace because it shows that the sinner has a choice to make, by the statement of Peter; "save yourselves from this untoward generation."

In Acts 3, Peter preached and as a result of the preaching, 5000 people were added to the church (Acts 4:4). It was the Word that worked. In Acts 8, Philip preached to the Samaritans and through the word, they were converted (Acts 8:12). Even the Eunuch was converted by the word (Acts 8:34-40). In Acts 9, Paul became a Christian. How? By hearing the word (Acts 9:6, Acts 22:12-16). In the same Acts 9, at



Joppa, those who believed were convinced by what they saw and heard (Acts 9:42). In Acts 10, Peter preached to Cornelius and the word spoken produced fruit (Acts 10:6, 34-47). The case of the Eunuch, Paul and Cornelius are special. They are special because they are invaluable in proving that the Holy Spirit does not work separately and apart from the Word. If it does, there will be no need to transport Philip to the Eunuch. There will be no need for Philip to preach anymore to the Eunuch, after all, the Eunuch was already seeking the truth. There will be no need for Ananias to speak first to Paul. Christ should have just converted Paul directly. Why the stress? There will be no need for Peter to first go to speak to Cornelius. The angel could have done everything. But in all these cases, the Holy Spirit worked through the Word and not directly on the sinner. The power of God to save is the Word (Rom. 1:16). In Acts 11, those who were spread abroad went preaching the word and the word converted many (Acts 11:19). The list is long but in all conversions recorded in the Bible, the word was preached and the Holy Spirit converted through the word.

One objection often raised against this is the conversion of Lydia, recorded in Acts 16:11-15. But this conversion does not prove that the Holy Spirit works separately and apart from the Word. The Bible says the Lord opened Lydia's heart. How? The Lord opened her heart through the Word spoken by Paul (Acts 16:14). In addition, notice that Paul was already preaching to her before her heart was opened. She heeded "the things spoken by Paul" and not things Paul was going to speak. Lydia got converted because of her faith (Acts 16:15) and the Bible says faith comes by hearing (Rom. 10:17). Therefore she was converted after hearing and through the Word since it is through the Word that a Christian is begotten

(1 Pet. 1:23). Her case cannot be different.

The Bible makes it clear that the Word is powerful enough to save (Heb. 4:12). It is the evidences revealed by the Holy Spirit through the scriptures that convicts a man. Felix was convicted (though was not converted) because of evidences presented to him (Acts 24:24-25). In Acts 2, Peter's audience was convicted because of evidences presented to them. This conviction led to repentance (Acts 2:37, 40-41). The Bereans were convinced and convicted because of evidences presented to them (Acts 17:11). And in every other place, evidences were presented before conversion. This is why the Christian's faith is not a blind one!

The Word knows the intent of man and it is able to convict man (Psalm 19:7). The Word is able to open any heart (Acts 16:14). If the person is spiritually dead, the Word is completely able to make alive (Psalm 119:50). If the person is blind, the Word is completely able to enlighten him (Psalm 19:8). Jesus said all men will be drawn to Him through the Word. That is, the Word is completely able to draw all men to Jesus (John 6:43-45). Is the heart too strong, the word is a hammer (Jer. 23:29). Is the heart dirty, the word is able to cleanse it (John 15:3). Is the heart rigid, the word is able to cut into it (Acts 2:37). Is the sinner an enemy of God, the word is able to reconcile him to God (2 Cor. 5:18,19).

The Holy Spirit has no need to work apart from the Word since all it does, the Word can do. All things said to be done by the Spirit is also attributed to the Word. The Holy Spirit testifies (John 15:26) through the Word (Acts 2:40, 8:25, 10:42, 20:21). The Holy Spirit convicts (John 16:8) through the Word (2 Tim 3:16). The Holy Spirit converts through the Word (Psalm 19:7). The Holy Spirit convinces through the Word (2 Tim 4:2). The Holy Spirit sanctifies (1 Cor. 6:11)



through the Word (John 17:17). When the Holy Spirit speaks, He speaks through the Word (1 Cor. 2:13). The Spirit calls through the Word (2 Thess. 2:14). For all things that pertains to life and godliness has been given to us through the Holy Spirit, in the Word (2 Pet 1:3). Therefore, we do not need to expect the Holy Spirit to work separately and apart from the Word.

This is not hard to understand. It is as simple as saying the Holy Spirit works through the word. That is, when the word is working, it is the Holy Spirit working, for the word is given by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21-23). To make this clearer, take a look at Stephen's argument in Acts 7:51-53. He said their fathers resisted the Holy Spirit. How did they resist the Holy Spirit? By resisting the words of the prophets (Acts 7:52). So if one should resist the Bible, such is resisting the Holy Spirit. For that is the only way the Holy Spirit works – through the Word.

Those who teach that the Holy Spirit works separately and apart from the word are not sincere. They spend so much money every year trying to get the gospel to the world. Why this waste if the Holy Spirit works separately and apart from the word? They could have just prayed and leave the Holy Spirit to do His work. But no, they must preach to convert. In addition, they claim to follow the Bible but they do not. If they do, they will not be teaching that the Holy Spirit works separately and apart from the word since there is no passage to show that anyone was converted without the Word.

Truly, Jesus said the Holy Spirit will come to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment but the Bible makes it clear that the Holy Spirit does these through the Word. For all scriptures is given by the Inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

Righteousness". Notice, also, how through the word Paul was able to convict Felix of sin, righteousness and judgement (Acts 24:24-25).

Let us speak where the Bible has spoken and be silent where it is. The Bible clearly proves that the Holy Spirit does not work apart and separately from the Word in the conversion of sinners.

The New School Prayer

Continued from page 24.

We can elect a pregnant Senior Queen,
And the unwed daddy, our Senior King.
It's "inappropriate" to teach right from wrong,
We're taught that such "judgments" do not belong.

We can get our condoms, & birth controls,
Study witchcraft, vampires & totem poles.
But the Ten Commandments are not allowed,
No Word of God must reach this crowd.

It's scary here I must confess,
When chaos reigns, the school's a mess.
So, Lord, this silent plea I make:
Should I be shot, My soul please take.

– **Anonymous 15-year-old from MN**

Questions & Answers

Matthew 28:19 And The Triune God

Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

Question: In Matthew 28:19, Jesus said that baptism should be done in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Since it is to be done in the name (singular) and not names (as in plural), what is the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit? Some teach that the name is Jesus and that Baptism must only be done in this name.

Answer: A careful reading of Matthew 28:19 reveals that there are THREE distinct persons mentioned in that verse (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). But those who try to fuse these three as ONE single person seem to find solace in the grammatical construction of this verse. The argument is made that since the command is to baptize "in the NAME of..." and not "in the NAMES of..." it refers to a single name and not a plurality of names. In other words, the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is Jesus. Shall we take a moment to examine the validity of this argument?

First, In Genesis 48:16, we find a statement made by Jacob while he was addressing the sons of Joseph. He said; "Let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." Here we also find THREE persons mentioned (Jacob, Abraham and Isaac). But the grammatical construction is where we should direct our minds as it seems to read like that of Matthew 28:19. Here in Genesis 48:16, we find the same singular number; "...my name and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac." Note that he did not say "my names and the names of my fathers..." And so we find the singular "name" used in connection with the father (Abraham), son (Isaac) and grandson (Jacob).

Going by the argument of those who advocate for a single name in Matthew 28:19 for the THREE persons (Father, Son and the Holy Spirit), it means (and consistency demands) that the THREE persons in Genesis 48:16 (Father, Son and Grandson) ought to have a single name since the singular "name" is used in connection with the three in both instances. And now, the question is: What is the one name of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Since the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is Jesus (as per Matthew 28:19), what is the name of the father, the son and the grandson in Genesis 48:16? I am not quite sure what the advocate of this doctrine would say is the one name of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; but I can safely say that there is not a single person on this earth who would be able to show us from the scriptures the ONE or SINGLE name of the three mentioned in Genesis 48. What then is the essence of all the trouble or argument about the "name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" being Jesus? It is simply to defend the false idea that there is only one person in the godhead.

I wish to point out that the issue here is not about what the word "name" stands for in either of the passages neither are we interested at this point in people's commentaries on what is meant by what was said in either passage (we will come to that at a different question). The point here is that the so called grammatical rule that was used to arrive at "a single name" for the Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit should also be consistently used to produce "a single name" for the trio in Genesis 48:16.

Second, I wish to call our attention to a grammatical principle known as the Granville Sharp's Rule. Granville Sharp (1735–1813) was a Greek language



scholar known for his contributions regarding the translation of New Testament Greek as it relates to the divinity of Christ. The Grandville Sharp's rule states that; "*When the copulative KAI connects two nouns of the same case, if the article HO or any of its cases precedes the first of the said nouns or participles, and is not repeated before the second noun or participle, the latter always refer to the same person that is expressed or described by the first noun or participle; i.e., it denotes a further description of the first-named person.*" (A Manual Of The Greek New Testament, Dana & Mantey, p.147 cited by Theopedia)

Basically, Gandville Sharp is saying that when you have two nouns which are not proper names (such as Peter, Paul, Timothy, etc.) which are describing a person, and the two nouns are connected by the word "and," and the first noun has the article ("the") while the second does not, both are referring to the same person. For example, if someone says; "We saw the President and Chief Commander in the office." Since the definite article (the) is only used once, before the first noun (president) and not repeated before the second noun (Chief Commander); according to the Granville Sharp's Rule, this means that the two nouns, joined by and, are clearly referring to the same individual. If the statement had read "We saw the President and the Chief Commander in the office," since the definite article (the) is used twice before the first and second nouns, the grammatical construction leaves the question open as to whether the president and chief commander are one and the same person or two different people and one cannot argue that it refers to one single person.

Two of the New Testament verses associated with the Granville Sharp Rule are Titus 2:13 and II Peter 1:1. In Titus 2:13, we find; "Looking for the blessed hope

and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (NASB). And in II Peter 1:1 we find "...our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." In the Greek, the words for "God" and "Saviour" are joined by kai and the definite article ho is used once, preceding "God"; according to the Grandville Sharp's Rule, both God and Saviour must refer to the same person – Jesus Christ.

And let us come to Matthew 28:19. The statement reads; "...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," Notice that the definite article (the) is mentioned three times before each of the nouns (Father, Son and Holy Spirit). According to the Grandville Sharp's Rule, one can only argue that it refers to the same person if the definite article is used before the first noun and not repeated before the second and third. And so, the argument of those who claim that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit refer to the same person in this verse and must have one single name is moot.

Finally, even if the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all have the same name, such would not prove that they are the same person. I have seen men who bear the same name with their father and even grandfather. A woman bears her husband's name when she is married to him but she is still a separate individual from her husband; thus, the single name argument for the three, does not prove anything if at all it is true. Not a single New Testament passage tells us what was said at the point of baptizing an individual and it would be wrong to insist on a particular formula to be said when baptizing a person.

ADDENDUM

What Should Christians Celebrate About Christ?

Julius C. Nwankwo | Abia, Nigeria

The only feast commanded by Christ to be celebrated by Christians is the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, to remember His death. The elements are the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. If one should do any other thing outside what Christ has commanded, such is involved in establishing his own righteousness (cf. Romans 10:1-2).

In Christendom today, there are a lot of celebrations observed by denominations in their quest to honor Christ. Such celebrations include: Advent, Christmas, Easter, Epiphany, Holy Week, Lent, Ascension Day, etc. But the question is: what should Christians celebrate about Christ? Or do we find all the above feasts commanded by Christ? To answer this question, we should first of all know that any act of worship to God that is based on the commandment of men will make one's worship to be in vain (Matt. 15:9). So, for us not to worship in vain, we need to know the doctrine of Christ (John 7:17 cf. 2Tim 2:12). Not knowing the doctrine of Christ will make one to go against the doctrine of Christ as a result of ignorance. When this happens, the result will be self-righteousness and transgressing the law of Christ (Rom.10:3; 2 John 9). In 1 Peter 4:11 we are told to speak as oracles of God; and Paul says that we should rightly divide the word of truth (2Tim.2:15). Based on these, can we find any of the above listed celebrations in the doctrine of Christ either by a direct command, approved apostolic examples or implications? The answer is a resounding NO. It is exactly what the apostle Paul referred to as self-imposed religion or will worship (Col.2:23).


What Did Christ Command Christians To Celebrate About Him?

The only feast that Christ commanded to be observed is the Lord's Supper or Communion (Matt.26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19, 20). This feast is to be

observed on the first day of the week (Sunday - Acts 20:7) in remembrance of His death at the cross of Calvary (I Cor. 11:26). But today, people have devised and imported so many other celebrations, observing it without divine authority. Even some of those that claim to be observing the Lord's Supper usually do it once in a year, others twice, while others do it four times in a year etc. Some observe it during burials, weddings of some influential people in the society, while others observe it on a week day different from the first day of the week.

Some denominations, in observing it will command their members to dress in white cloth on that day to show that they are clean. In Matt. 23:25-28, we read: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

The elements of this feast consist of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. How do we know that the bread is unleavened? Let us see the following passages of the scriptures: In 2 Chron. 35:17 we find that "...the children of Israel who were present kept the Passover



at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days." In Ezek. 45:21, we find that "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall observe the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten." It was this Passover feast that Jesus and His disciples gathered to observe when Jesus instituted the Communion and commanded them to observe it in His remembrance. It is the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine of the Passover feast that Jesus took from. Matthew 26:26-28 reads; "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

In 1 Cor. 11:23-26, Apostle Paul said: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

According to the text above, the bread represents the body of Jesus Christ while the fruit of the vine represents His blood. It is very sad that a religious organization teaches that the bread turns to the actual body of Christ while the fruit of the vine turns to His actual blood. This is a teaching from the pit of hell because Jesus was standing before His disciples while holding the loaf of bread in His hand and the cup with the fruit of the vine. So, the bread takes the place of His body and the fruit of the vine His blood.

Unfortunately, some have refused to use these two elements but substitute it with other things not commanded by the Lord. This also is against the will of God and a transgression of the will of God (2John 9-11).

Conclusion

The only feast commanded by Christ to be celebrated by Christians is the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, to remember His death. The elements are the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. If one should do any other thing outside what Christ has commanded, such is involved in establishing his own righteousness (cf. Romans 10:1-2). Remember that the Word of God says that we should speak as the oracle of God (1Peter 4:11). So, let us respect God and His word and it will be well with us.

Someone once said...

I asked for strength; and God gave me difficulties to make me strong.

I asked for wisdom and God gave me problems to solve.

I asked for courage and God gave me dangers to overcome.

I asked for love and God gave me troubled people to help.

My prayers were answered!

Jesus is better than your computer

Jesus is better than your computer. He **ENTERS** your life, **SCANS** your problems, **EDITS** your tension, **DOWNLOADS** solutions, **DELETES** your worries And **SAVES** you.