

Matthew 28:19 and the Triune God:

A Response To O.S. Asaolu

By

Osamagbe Lesley EGHAREVBA | Lagos, Nigeria

osamagbelesley1@gmail.com

6th January, 2022

In the January – March 2022 edition of [Unmasking Sophistry Magazine](#), I answered a question on Matthew 28:19 on pages 37-38. Brother Olumuyiwa Asaolu released a [rejoinder](#) to that article on the 4th of January, 2022. It is my desire to respond to his rejoinder in this piece. Although, the magazine has an open door policy of publishing both sides of an issue and we have always encouraged people who disagree with any of the articles published to write a rebuttal (if they so desire) for onward publication. But his rejoinder came very early and has been in circulation. Since our next publication will be in April, 2022, I think that it is not ideal to delay my response until that time. Thus, I shall pay careful attention to the points raised and address them. Nevertheless, God willing, both his rejoinder and this response will be published in the next issue of the Magazine, whether or not he releases a rejoinder after reading this.

Brother Asaolu is my very good friend and brother in Christ and I love and respect him so much. But it seems that I have to expose the errors that he is promoting concerning the Godhead. I have no desire whatsoever to win a polemic victory but I believe that faithful Christians must be ready at all times to tackle teachings contrary to sound doctrine. To teach that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are ONE SINGLE INDIVIDUAL is one of the greatest damage that anyone would attempt to do to the Christian faith. He has introduced passages of the scriptures, some of which has no bearing with the subject matter and made statements that cannot be backed up by any Bible passage or any Greek scholar in the world and even contradicted himself severally. A little reflection on his argument (in my opinion) reveals the fact that the arguments are neither Scriptural nor logical. Let us get down to business!

What Is “The Name” Of The Trio In Matthew 28:19?

Brother Asaolu accused me of not “*addressing the query posed*” in page 37 of the magazine. He needed different separate names for each of the three or a single name for the trio mentioned in Matthew 28:19. He even said it in page 2 that “*Though Christ refers to “the name of” three personalities, He did not mention an actual name in this Commission.*” He seems not to understand that the three names in that verse are: (1) Father, (2) Son, and (3) Holy Spirit. If I say “my dad went to town,” I am not using “dad” as a name but only as a relationship. But if I say “Dad, can I go with you to town?,” in this case, I am using “Dad” as a name. That is how it is used in Matthew 28:19; and elsewhere, we find that God is called by the name “Father” (Mark 14:36). Even Isaiah 9:6 clearly indicates that “Everlasting Father” is a name that one shall be called. Understanding this, we should not have trouble with the fact that the **three names in Matthew 28:19 are Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. What Asaolu should prove to the readers is that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not names! He has not done that and he may never be able to do that. This is because according to him, “*...a name is simply a term by which a person, place or thing is called. The term by which each of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is called is “heir”*” (p.3). How in the world would he deny that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are names and at the same time insist that “heir” is the name for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Brother Asaolu further accused Lesley of not explaining “*what ‘name’ means in Matthew 28:19.*” Yes I did not and it was deliberate. I stated on page 37 that the issue I was addressing is not about what the word “name” stands for in either of the passages being discussed but the grammatical rule used in arriving at the so-called single name for the three. Here is my very statement on p.37:

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.

Did brother Asaolu read that statement of mine? If he did, why must he accuse me of not explaining what “name” means? Magazine articles are guided by spaces and one should not expect that all of the issues surrounding a topic must be discussed at one time in one article.

The Argument On Genesis 48:16

Whatever brother Asaolu has said about the statement in Genesis 48:16, his inability to apply his so called grammatical rule to the statement “*the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,*” conclusively disproves his contention that the “name” being singular in Matthew 28:19 means the Father, Son and Holy Spirit share one name. He has been contending all along that **the grammatical construct of Matthew 28:19 shows that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all bear same name** (see page 18 of his article “*Is God one or three?*”). He even said in page 16:

The great commission is not about baptizing disciples in the **nameS** of three distinct persons. The instruction is to immerse disciples into the new covenant name of God. **This name** covers each role God reveals Himself in this gospel era. We cannot run away from the fact that the INSPIRED apostles understood that under the NT, the name of the Father is the name of the Son and is the name of the Holy Spirit (emphasis LE).

His argument is based on the grammar; because we have “name” (not names) used with Father, Son and Holy Spirit, he thinks it must mean one name. Even now, he alludes to Matthew 10:2 and Revelation 21:14 to show that “names” is used with “apostles” in an effort to back up his argument. And when I offered him a parallel statement where “his rule” should be applied, rather than simply applying “his rule” he preferred to give his commentary. He picks up on my words and said “seems to read like” is not “same as.” He also talks about Jacob discussing “self, grandfather and father” NOT “father, son and grandson” as I mentioned. All of these are beside the point. Abraham begot Isaac and Isaac begot Jacob. In that order, Abraham is the father (of Isaac), Isaac is the son (of Abraham) and Jacob is the grandson (of Abraham). That is simply how I chose to describe them and Asaolu said it is incorrect. Well, if he is willing to affirm that “Jacob is not Abraham’s grandson,” I will be glad to deny it. The simple argument reiterated on Genesis 48:16 and Matthew 28:19 is this: we have the singular word (name) used and more than one person is mentioned together IN BOTH PASSAGES; (1) “*the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac,*” and (2) *the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.* Let Asaolu simply tell us why his rule will not work for both!

I have used a similar argument when debating a denominational pastor on the necessity of baptism. The man insists that the phrase; “...for the forgiveness of sins” as used in Acts 2:38 means “because their sins have been forgiven.” I pointed to Matthew 26:28 to show that the same phrase “...for the forgiveness of sins” appears there. In the first passage, they were to repent and be baptized “for the forgiveness of sins” while the second passage talks about Jesus shedding His blood “for the forgiveness of sins.” My argument was that if you apply one meaning to the first verse, you have to apply the same meaning to the second. We are not asking for the meaning or background of the passages; both have different messages but why give different meanings to the same expressions found in both text? In fact, Asaolu is not even sure of the explanation he gave because he said that “*Jacob **might be** referring to just one or more than a single designation*” (emphasis L.E.). Yet, in another page, he finds a single name for them which he called “heir.” We do not actually need his commentary **and I would not pay a single attention to it.** I may not even object to whatever explanation he may give on those passages whether it is correct or not; but let

him apply “his rule” and tell us his conclusion – the one name for the trio in Genesis 48:16 – Is it heir? Or is it MORE THAN A SINGLE NAME?

I am amazed at how he misused Revelation 3:12 in order to justify his point by all means. He said; “If Christ had stated: *Baptizing them in the name of the Father and in the name of the Son and in the name of the Holy Spirit...* This could mean to use three distinct names.” And then he brought up Revelation 3:12 and concludes that “*The name of*” is repeated and could be indicative of three names, one of which is identified as “*new Jerusalem.*” But we find “name” repeated in Genesis 48:16; “my name” and “the name of” my fathers Abraham and Isaac. From his argument, this should be THREE NAMES. Yet, he was able to produce a SINGLE name for them. This is the problem: INCONSISTENT SELF-MADE RULES AND APPLICATION OF THEM! And how on earth did he not realize that the passage talks about the name of a person and the name of a city? That text mentions *the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.* Three PERSONS are NOT described here like Matthew 28:19 and Genesis 48:16 and the passage is not even parallel to what he tries to prove. Besides, would he interpret that passage LITERALLY? I truly wish to know.

He quotes 1 Chronicles 17:24 and 1 Samuel 17:45 and tries to create a parallel to Matthew 28:19 but there is absolutely no connection whatsoever. The first passage says; “*The LORD of hosts is the God of Israel.*” Every speaker of English language knows that the sentence means exactly what it says and referring to one person. The second text says “*...come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.*” There is no conjunction (and) that joins “the LORD of hosts” AND “the God of the armies of Israel” like the construction of Matthew 28:19. So what is the relevance?

Brother Asaolu used Hebrews 11:8-9 – “*...the heirs with him of the same promise*” to prove the name of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He said it is heir. I know that those who have obeyed the gospel of Christ are heirs too. Is that OUR SINGLE NAME?

Grandville Sharp’s Rule

I am amazed at how Brother Asaolu muddled up the Grandville Sharp’s rule. He brought up Jude 1:4 to dismiss the relevance of Sharp’s rule but it only shows he did not look at the text well and he did not fully grasp the rule. He said; “*It is interesting that LE cited and exemplified GSR with Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 to surmise that “both God and Saviour must refer to the same person - Jesus Christ.” I wonder if he would dare such with Jude 1:4 and accept the ramification of “the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Let us look at the text (Jude 1:4) and the phrase to which reference is made.

In the Greek, the above phrase is written thus: *ho monos despotes kai kurios ego Iesous Christos.* To translate that in English, what we have is: *ho (the – g3588) monos (only – g3441) despotes (Master, Lord, etc. – g1203) kai (and – g2532) kurios (Lord – g2962) ego (of us – g1473) Iesous (Jesus – g2424) Christos (Christ – g5547).* It simply reads; **the only Master and Lord of us Jesus Christ.** You see that the definite article is used once before the first noun (Master) and it is not repeated before the second one (Lord). Since the definite article (the) is only used once, before the first noun and not repeated before the second noun. According to the Granville Sharp’s Rule, this means that the two nouns, joined by *and*, are clearly referring to the same individual. In fact, several translations capture this verse very clearly in line with what I have just stated:

For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny **Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord** (Jude 1:4, NIV)

I say this because some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying that God's marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives. The condemnation of such people was recorded long ago, for they have denied **our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ** (Jude 1:4, NLT)

Readers may check other translations online at [Bible Hub](#) and see how that verse is rendered. Even though I did not use Jude 1:4 to explain this rule, the Grandville Sharp's rule is still EXTREMELY RELEVANT and CANNOT BE DEBUNKED as far as this discussion is concern! I need brother Asaolu to simply appreciate this rule OR he should clearly prove it is faulty. **He has not done any of these!**

He brought two passages in an attempt to disprove the rule. He introduced Revelation 22:1: "*proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb*" and he said it refers to one throne not two. And then he brought up Colossians 2:2: "*acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ*" and he also said it refers to a single mystery. But this is a MISAPPLICATION of the Grandville Sharp's rule. In the statement of this rule, Sharp only discussed substantives (i.e., nouns, etc.) of **personal description**, not those which referred **to things**. Let me quote the rule again and please notice the part in **bold**:

*"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)

Simply put, the rule states that: **definite article + singular noun + copulative conjunction + singular noun = THE SAME PERSON. NOT the same THING but the same PERSON. And so, Asaolu's mathematical equations do not prove anything and the TWO passages he introduced are INAPPROPRIATE passages that do not fault the Grandville Sharp's rule. I hope that brother Asaolu will simply admit that the Sharp's rule is correct and nullifies his own rule rather than try to look for scriptures to disprove the rule. That is an exercise that may never be accomplished!**

He said that Isaiah 9:6 and 2 Corinthians 3:17 prove that three personalities were represented by a lone person. I deny this! One cannot take a passage or two that he seems not to understand and then array it against several passages of the scriptures that teach the complete opposite. Besides, nothing in these passages prove that Jesus and the Father are ONE SINGLE INDIVIDUAL. Whether anyone likes it or not, the Son will deliver the kingdom to God the Father at the end of the day (I Corinthians 15:24) and I have not yet seen a convincing explanation from the Oneness advocate on this passage.

What Is The Problem?

Asaolu stated in p.4 that "*Faithful members of the Lord's church, do not insist on "a particular formula" or set of exact words to be said when baptizing anyone.*" Yet on page 2, he insists that "*the Lord revealed a single name to his apostles to use in baptizing converts. That name is "the Lord Jesus Christ" as evident in Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5, etc.*" In page 17 of his article, he said:

In order to deny that Christ is personification of the Godhead, many refuse to mention his name while immersing a penitent but prefer to recite the phrase in Mt 28:19 as a formula. Before dipping a convert in water, do such not insist the penitent must confess that "Jesus Christ" is the Son of God or hear that name mentioned? No baptizer from the Lord's church would be satisfied with a penitent saying: "I believe in the Son of God and his authority" without the very name verbalized to identify the Son! In telling us what to do, the scriptures has indicated how to do it **and impliedly limited the essence of what is to be said by both the baptizer and the penitent**. Dipping someone into water with neither party saying anything on what is being done and why, is not really a baptism. A penitent

must confess Jesus Christ (Rm 10:9-10) or call on His name (Acts 2:21; 22:16) to demonstrate that he believes (Acts 8:35-37) in order to receive remission of sins via immersion in water (Mk 16:16). Thereafter, the one baptizing immerses such penitent into the same Christ who embodies the Godhead. **Neither of them should fail to say the name.**

Asaolu seems displeased because “*many refuse to mention his (Jesus’) name while immersing a penitent...*” Yet at the same time, “faithful members of the Lord’s church do not insist on a set of exact words to be said when baptizing anyone.” According to him (1) the Lord revealed a single name to His apostles **to use in** baptizing; (2) the name is “*the Lord Jesus Christ*” (3) his complaint is that many refuse to mention this name **while baptizing** but decide to mention something else and (4) at the same time, faithful members of the Lord’s church do not insist on a particular set of words to be mentioned while baptizing (5) Baptizing without the baptizer saying the name is not really a baptism, etc. Asaolu insists that the name is “*the Lord Jesus Christ*” (p.2) and that this name (“*the Lord Jesus Christ*”) must be mentioned at baptism, yet that does not sound like “a set of words” or “a formula” to him. Well, a formula does not have to be a very long sentence to be a formula. It is a formula and it is a set of words if you insist that “*the Lord Jesus Christ*” should be mentioned while baptizing an individual even if there are 100 other words said alongside with it at different times. “*The Lord Jesus Christ*” is four words and Asaolu said that these set of EXACT words MUST be said when baptizing. It is amazing, if not amusing that he insists on a set of words to be said while baptizing someone, yet at the same time, according to him, “*faithful members of the Lord’s church, do not insist on “a particular formula” or set of exact words to be said when baptizing anyone.*”

In fact, what is the whole essence of his argument on the single name **to be used** in baptism? Is he aware that there are variations of the name? (1) “...baptized in the name of **Jesus Christ**” – Acts 2:38 (2) “...baptized in the name of **the Lord Jesus**” (Acts 8:16; 19:5) (3) “...baptized in the name of **the Lord**” (Acts 10:48). Which of these should be used in baptism? He simply wants the name to be pronounced (call it over the person being baptized). If baptizing in the name of Jesus means calling the name of Jesus over the one being baptized, remember that in Acts 2:38, Peter said they should “*Repent...in the name of Jesus Christ.*” “Repent” is also “in the name of Jesus Christ.” Let Asaolu tell us HOW the penitent SHOULD “repent... in the name of Jesus Christ.” **But I wish that he would also tell us if those who were immersed as depicted in his quote above have been wrongly immersed!** The Oneness Pentecostals that I have met will clearly tell you that if you are baptized and “the name of Jesus” is not mentioned, your baptism is not correct. **Brother Asaolu should clearly tell us whether if a man is immersed in water and the baptizer said something relating to the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit without mentioning Jesus, the baptism is invalid. If the baptism is valid without the baptizer mentioning the name of Jesus and Asaolu recognizes such as being baptized into Christ, then his whole argument IS A WASTE OF TIME!** Why does he have to argue over this if he believes that a person is scripturally baptized whether or not the name of Jesus is called over him at the point of baptism?

Different Individuals Could Bear The Same Name

In my article, I stated that 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. And I insist on this. Asaolu brought up the idea of them “co-located at an instant.” I have seen men who bear the same name with their father and even grandfather. It seems that Asaolu will have them live together for them to be able to bear the same name. That is absurd! I remember that Asaolu have argued at one time about the name of the church. If I remember correctly, he does not believe that the term “church of Christ” is the proper name for the church. He believes it is a descriptive name just like other descriptive names that we have in the New Testament for the church. I know that in the Bible, The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit are called different names at different times (for example, the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter, the Spirit of

Truth, etc.; the Son is called by different names in Isaiah 9:6 and elsewhere; and even the Father is called by other different names in Exodus 3:14, Isaiah 42:8, etc.). How in the world is it consistent to insist for a single name for any or all of the three and it makes no sense to insist for a single name for the church? God's children are also called by different names in the New Testament but Asaolu would not insist for a single name. **Let him give us A CLEAR PASSAGE that reveals the EXCLUSIVE SINGLE NAME of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and then he will be making some progress!** Thus, I insist that the single name argument for the three, does not prove anything if at all it is true. May I ask this question which has been bothering my mind: **How do we distinguish a person who is baptized in the name of Jesus from a person who is baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?**

What Does "Name" Mean?

The Greek word translated "name" in Matthew 28:19 is "*onoma*" (**g3686**) and most scholars agree it means authority. A.T. Robertson cites the use of *onoma* in Matthew 28:19 as an example where "name" "has the idea of 'the authority of'" (1934, p. 740). Vine writes that "name" in Colossians 3:17 means "in recognition of the authority of" (1940, p. 100; cf. Miller, 2007, p.80). Moulton and Milligan write that "name" refers to "the authority of the person" and cite Philippians 2:9 and Hebrews 1:4 as examples (1930, p. 451). Commenting on Philippians 2:9, Dave Miller said; "Paul's reference to the name of Jesus is a reference to the authority and jurisdiction of Christ. Jesus' name being above every name means that His authority transcends all other authority." New Testament scholar John Eadie summarized the thrust of Colossians 3:17 thus: "It...strictly means—by his authority, or generally, in recognition of it. To speak in His name, or to act in His name, is to speak and act not to His honour, but under His sanction and with the conviction of His approval" (1884, 4:249). Dave Miller also has the following to say on this:

After Moses presented God's demands to Pharaoh, he returned to the Lord and complained that Pharaoh's reaction was retaliatory: "For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people" (Exodus 5:23). For Moses to speak in God's name meant to speak only those things that God wanted said. After healing the lame man, Peter explained to the people: "And His name...has made this man strong" (Acts 3:16). He meant that it was Christ's authority and power that achieved the healing. Likewise, when Paul became annoyed at the condition of the demon possessed slave girl, he declared: "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" (Acts 16:18, emp. added). He, too, meant that he had Christ's backing and authorization to do such a thing. So when Paul states that everyone is obligated to speak and act "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Colossians 3:17), he indicates that all human conduct must be conformed to the directives of Jesus Christ.

We can go on and on to cite Greek scholars on what name means. But the simple point is: it does not mean that three people mentioned in Matthew 28:19 have **one single and special name** that must be pronounced on someone when baptizing the individual; It simply refers to the authority.

Unnecessary Assumptions

Having addressed the arguments of Brother Asaolu relative to the oneness doctrine, I wish to point out some unnecessary assumptions that he made. Contrary to his supposition, my piece was not motivated by the discussion on "*Men of God (MOG) Preaching the Gospel*" WhatsApp platform and he cannot prove otherwise. Making assumptions about what motivated my writing is unnecessary. I did not cite any statement from the platform in my writing. Neither did I even cite a single statement from his 33 paged write-up. Brother Asaolu is not the first person to advocate the oneness doctrine and I can safely say that there is not a single argument that he has made on this subject which has not been previously made by the oneness Pentecostals in the past. Those who have read debates on this issue such as the *Wallace –Vaughn (1951)*, *Porter – Hicks (1957)*, *Wallace – Miller (1961)*, *Donahue – Weatherly (2010)*, etc. would see that these arguments were made by these denominational pastors and **were properly addressed**. Asaolu somewhat tried to make them in a different way, but they all point to the same thing!

Also, making assumptions and insinuating that I “*opted to observe rather than comment*” during the MOG WhatsApp discussion is unnecessary. For the most part, I did not even have time to properly read through the discussion. Although, I have been an active participant in Bible discussions in that group in the past and have engaged in several debates there. However recently, due to some more pressing commitments, I have not been following up with discussions therein. Often, there are too many bulky (and sometimes) uncoordinated messages to read in the group, I only ended up skimming and that is all – looking through passively (without interest).

But even if I had deliberately decided to “*observe rather than comment*” in the WhatsApp group, that should not be an issue as he seems to present it. Most people come to a closed group discussion to advocate what they cannot boldly teach in their congregations. I am somewhat beginning to lose interest in such kind of discussion. And since there are other pressing engagements that I must attend to, I only devote my time to address issues that have been brought to the public. Those who are bold enough should publicly publish their writing and not stay in a closed group, rehashing their points and accusing people of not commenting. At least, I did not only “observe” when I received the 33paged write-up of brother Asaolu on the 6th of November, 2021, I was still reading through when I told him the next day that I will address a question on Matthew 28:19 about the singular name in the next issue of Unmasking Sophistry. I did not consider it necessary to rebut his 33paged article since I believed there are enough materials already available which masterfully did justice to his work even as I mentioned to him privately.

Prior to that discussion on the MOG platform in October 2021, I have known brethren (including Asaolu) who have advocated this teaching *on social media platforms* and personally, I have somewhat discussed it with some of them privately. I have not brought up the discussion because none of them (at least the few that I know) has published anything about it. Somehow, Asaolu’s publication (and not the MOG discussion) triggered my interest to write on the oneness doctrine as I consider this extremely important since churches of Christ are not known to teach such doctrine. Even at that, I deliberately chose not to quote his article in my writing so it does not appear I am picking up on a man rather than what he advocates.

I am hoping and praying that God helps us all in understanding and doing His will. Amen.

To Download Brother Asaolu’s Cited Rejoinder, Please Click:

https://lainosint.com/download/faith/A_rejoinder_to_Mt_28_19_And_The_Triune_God.pdf

To Download **Unmasking Sophistry Magazine** (January – March, 2022, Volume 2, Number 1), Please Click https://www.unmaskingsophistry.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Unmasking_Sophistry_January-March_2022.pdf

To Download Brother Asaolu’s 33paged Write-up Titled “*Is God one or three,*” Please Click: https://lainosint.com/download/faith/Is_God_one_or_three.pdf