



# 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 eleventh edition of *Unmasking Sophistry Magazine*. It is the third issue in the year 2023. We thank God for the grace He has given us for this journal's regular publication. As usual, this journal is designed to teach the truth of God's word and expose the various arguments prepared in defense of false religion and arguments designed to oppose the Christian faith. To cover a wide range of areas, various sections have been created in this journal and topics relating to each section will be discussed at every edition.

In the last issue of this journal, we examined various subjects under each of the sections including: *The Deity of Christ; The Ten Commandments: Scripture Vs. Catholicism; A Discussion On the Head Covering Of I Corinthians 11; The Council of Nicea; The History Of the Institutional Controversy; I Am Determined To No Longer Linger; The Importance of A Christian Mother In the Home; Predestination; Making Your Calling And Election Sure; How Strong Is Your Faith?; What (Who) Are We Living For?;* and other intriguing topics. We appreciate all the encouraging feedback received from our dear readers.

Meanwhile, this edition shall focus on topics such as; *Were the Early Church Fathers Catholic?; Buddah and Christ; A Discourse on The Covering of I Corinthians 11; Quibbles that Backfired; The Union of Church and State; The History of the institutional controversy; Faith Under Fire; What Is The Proper Way To Refer To A Preacher?; Faith or Faithfulness;* and other intriguing topics.

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](http://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 Month of July and pray that we all become more steadfast in the work of God. Once again, all the prayers and encouragement from readers are duly appreciated. We would continue to hold fast to 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

## Were The Early "Church Fathers" Catholic?

By Greg Litmer | Kentucky, USA

Leading Catholic apologists, such as Karl Keating, author of *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, quote extensively from the writings of various early church writers. Since so many of the Catholic doctrines are not found in the scriptures, they believe that these writings supply evidence that the doctrines peculiar to Catholicism were held and practiced by the very earliest Christians. Mr. Keating states their position very well in the following manner. After referring to Dionysius of Corinth, Tertullian, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Ireanaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Peter of Alexandria, Lactantius and Eusebius, he states, "Remember, these are the works which form the basis of Christian historical writing in the immediate post-New Testament centuries... their cumulative testimony should carry considerable weight." (*Catholicism & Fundamentalism*, p. 204)

Were the early "Church Fathers" Catholic? Did they believe those doctrines now recognized as being peculiarly Catholic? Let's examine just a few of them. A fundamental belief of Roman Catholicism is transubstantiation. **The Baltimore Catechism**, states the doctrine this way:

"The whole Christ is really, truly, and substantially present in the Holy Eucharist. We use the words, 'really, truly, and substantially' to describe Christ's presence in the Holy Eucharist in order to distinguish Our Lord's teaching from that of mere men who falsely teach that the Holy Eucharist is only a sign or figure of Christ, or that He is present only by His power." p.273.

"When Our Lord said, This is My body, the entire substance of the bread was changed into His body; and when He said, This is My blood, the entire substance of the wine was changed into His blood." p.276

Of course, those passages referred to by Catholic writers in an attempt to support this doctrine are those passages dealing with the institution of the Lord's Supper and John 6. Karl Keating even goes so far as to say, "There is no record in the early centuries of any Christian doubting the Catholic interpretation. There exists no document in which the literal interpretation is opposed and only the metaphorical accepted." (*Catholicism & Fundamentalism*, p.238). Can we find any early "Church Fathers" who did not hold the doctrine of transubstantiation?

1. Justin Martyr (mid 2nd century), "Now it is evident, that in this prophecy (allusion is made) to the bread which our Christ gave us to eat, **in remembrance of His being made flesh for the sake of His believers**, for whom also He suffered; and to the cup which He gave us to drink, in remembrance of His own blood, with giving of thanks." (*Dialogue with Trypho*, LXX)
2. Tertullian (early 3rd century) "Then, having taken the bread and given it to His disciples, he made it His own body, by saying, "This is my body,' **that is the figure of my body.**" (*Against Marcion*, IV:40)
3. Origen (early 3rd century) Now, if 'everything that entereth into the mouth goes into the belly and is cast out into the draught,' even the meat which has been sanctified through the word of God and prayer, in accordance with the fact that it is material, goes into the belly and is cast out into the draught, but in respect of the prayer which comes upon it, according to the proportion of the faith, becomes a benefit and is a means of clear vision to the mind which looks to that which is beneficial, and it is not the material of the bread but the word which is said over it which is of advantage to him who eats in not unworthily of the



Lord. **And these things indeed are said of the typical and symbolical body.**"(Commentary on Matthew, XI; 14).

4. Cyprian (mid 3rd century) "Knowing then that I have been admonished that, in offering the cup, tradition of the Lord must be observed, and that nothing must be done by us but what the Lord first did on our behalf, as that the cup which is offered **in remembrance of Him** should be offered mingled with wine."(Epistle 62)

Catholic apologists point to John 6 as the key passage in which our Lord speaks of what will be instituted at the Last Supper. Here, they say, is where the clearest teaching about Transubstantiation is to be found in the scriptures. Is it true that no record exists from the early centuries of Christianity doubting the Catholic interpretation? Is it true that no document exists in which the literal interpretation of John 6 is opposed and only the metaphorical accepted? Is it true that those early Christians were Catholic and held to the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation?

1. Clement of Alexandria (late 2nd century) "Elsewhere the Lord, in the Gospel according to John brought this out **by symbols, when He said, 'Eat ye my flesh, and drink my blood'; describing distinctly by metaphor** the drinkable properties of faith and the promise, by means of which the Church, like a human being consisting of many members, is refreshed and grows, is welded together and compacted of both –**of faith, which is the body, and of hope, which is the soul; as also the Lord of flesh and blood.**"(The instructor, I. vi. 43)


2. Tertullian (early 3rd century) "He says, it is true, that "the flesh profiteth nothing; but then, as in the former case, the meaning must be regulated by the subject which is spoken of. Now, because they thought His discourse was harsh and intolerable,

**supposing that he had really and literally enjoined on them to eat his flesh,** he, with the view of ordering the state of salvation as a spiritual thing, set out with the principle, 'it is the spirit that quickeneth:' and then added, "The flesh profiteth nothing,' – meaning of course, to the giving of life, he also goes on to explain what He would have us to understand by spirit; "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.'... Constituting, therefore, His word as the life giving principle, because that word is spirit and life, He likewise called His flesh by the same appellation; because, too, the Word had become flesh, we ought therefore to desire Him in order that we may have life, and to **devour Him with the ear, and to ruminate on Him with the understanding, and to digest Him by faith.**"(On the Resurrection of the Flesh, XXXVII)

The early church writers are also very important to the Catholic teaching concerning the Papacy, and it is true that many of them teach that Peter was in Rome. The more important question would be, "Do they teach that Peter was the first pope?"

1. Tertullian (early 3rd century) Just, for example, as if Peter too had censured Paul, because whilst forbidding circumcision, he actually circumcised Timothy himself. Never mind those who pass sentence on apostles! **It is a happy fact that Peter is on the same level with Paul in the very glory of martyrdom.**(On Prescription Against Heretics, Chap. XXIV)

2. Cyprian (mid 3rd century) "**For neither did Peter, whom first the Lord chose, and upon whom He built His Church, when Paul disputed with him afterwards about circumcision, claim anything to himself insolently, nor arrogantly assume anything;** so as to say that he held the primacy, and that he ought rather to be obeyed by novices and those lately come."(Cyprian, Epistle LXX, 3)



3. Eusebius (early 4th century): "Now Clement, writing in the sixth book of the Hypotyposes, makes this statement. For he says that Peter and James and John, after the Saviour's ascension, though pre-eminently honored by the Lord, did not contend for glory, but made James the Just, bishop of Jerusalem." (Ecclesiastical History, Book Vi, ii. I)

The main passage that Roman Catholic authorities use in support of Peter's supposed papacy is Matthew 16. In light of the great weight given to the early church writers by Roman Catholics as they seek to find foundation for their beliefs, we must ask, "How did the early church writers interpret Matthew 16?"

1. Origen (early 3rd century) "And perhaps that which Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, if we say it as Peter, not by flesh and blood revealing it unto us, but by the light from the Father in heaven shining in our heart, we **too become as Peter, being pronounced blessed as he was**, because that the grounds on which he was pronounced blessed apply also to us, by reason of the fact that flesh and blood have not revealed to us with regard to Jesus that He is Christ, the Son of the living God, but the Father in heaven, . . . And if we too have said like Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God', not as if flesh and blood had revealed it unto us, but by light from the Father in heaven having shone in our heart, **we become a Peter, and to us that might be said by the Word, "Thou art Peter', etc. For a rock is every disciple of Christ of whom those drank who drank of the spiritual rock which is followed them, and upon every such rock is built every word of the church."**

"But if you suppose that upon that one Peter only the whole church is built by God, what would you say about John the son of thunder or each one of the Apostles? Shall we otherwise dare to say, that

against Peter in particular the gates of Hades shall not prevail, but that they shall prevail against the other Apostles and the perfect? Does not the saying previously made, "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it,' hold in regard to all and in the case of each of them? **And also the saying, Upon this rock I will build my church?'** (Origen's Commentary on Matthew, 10 & 11)

Considerable emphasis is given to the word "rock" in Matthew 16:18. The Catholic position is that the word Cephas is merely the transliteration of the Aramaic Kepha into Greek and Kepha means rock. Therefore, there is no difference between Peter and rock. They teach that Matthew was originally written in Aramaic, that Matthew was essentially saying, "Thou art Rock, and upon this Rock I will build my church." Only in the Greek translation of the Aramaic original was there a difference. This they teach in spite of the fact that no tone single fragment of an original Aramaic Matthew has ever been found.

However, did those early church writers recognize a difference between Peter and Rock?

1. Tertullian (early 3rd century) "Again, He changes the name of Simon to Peter, inasmuch as the Creator also altered the names of Abram, and Sarai, and Oshea, by calling the latter Joshua, and adding a syllable to each of the former. But why Peter? If it was because of the vigour of his faith, there were many solid materials which might lend a name from their strength. **Was it because Christ was both a rock and a stone? For we read of His being place for a stone of stumbling and fora rock of offense'**" (Against Marcion, Chap. XIII)

Do not be deceived. While some of what those early church writers taught was true and some was not, it is important to note that right or wrong, they were not Catholic.



# WORLD RELIGIONS

## Buddha and Christ

By Jefferson David Tant | Tennessee, USA

This article has been adapted from and based upon material provided by W. G. Singleton, who has spent much time in Cambodia teaching among the Buddhists. Material from other sources has also proved useful in compiling this information.

Buddha was born in 563 B.C. in an area now known now as the nation of Nepal. He was born into royalty, but as he became an adult, he wanted to see the real world. He renounced his royalty and lived a simple life. His wisdom and humility is seen in many of his writings. There is no evidence that he intended to found a religion, but it seems his followers in later years did bring this about.

Nepal was a part of the great Persian Empire at that time, which had defeated the Babylonian empire in October 539 BC, under the leadership of the Persian king Cyrus. Living in Babylon at that time was an older man named Daniel. Daniel had been taken captive as a young boy when Nebuchadnezzar, the ruler of Babylon, had destroyed Jerusalem in 605 B.C. The center of the Babylonian Empire would be in the nation now known as Iraq.

Through a series of interesting events, Daniel had risen to position of prominence in the Babylonian kingdom, while maintaining his faith in the true God rather than the idol gods of Babylon. Some of the Babylonian authorities were jealous of the Jewish Daniel, and conspired to trap him. They went to the king and asked that a law be passed, that if anyone made a petition or prayer to anyone besides the king, he should be cast into a den of lions. Knowing Daniel, they knew he would continue to pray to God.

Upon seeing Daniel praying, as his habit was, they reported this to the king. He realized he had been tricked, but had to carry out his decree, so he had Daniel cast into a den of lions. The next morning he

went to see what had happened during the night, and was amazed to see Daniel walking around unharmed. Evidently the lions decided they were not hungry that night. The king rightly assumed that Daniel's God that had protected him from the Lions was the true and living God, and sent messengers throughout his kingdom that people should worship the God of Daniel. This would have been around the year 538 B.C. when Buddha would have been about 25 and Daniel in his late 70s by then.

That message would have gone to the region where Buddha lived as that was a part of the empire, and he would have been aware of the king's decree.

Now back to Buddha. He was born on the edge of the Persian Empire, in northwest India in 563 B.C. (Daniel would have been in his mid to late 50s at this time.) This was near the area from which the Magi came following the birth of Christ. The gospel writer Matthew records their visit and their worship of this one they recognized as the great promised one. *"After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh"* (**Matthew 2:11**).

In 534 B.C., at the age of 29, Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama) left his father's castle in Nepal to explore the world in a quest for truth. This would have been during Daniel's later years (probably mid 80s), and in fact would have been just a few years after the time that Daniel had escaped harm after being thrown into the





lion's den. Upon witnessing Daniel's miraculous escape, King Darius was so impressed that he issued a decree. *"Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: 'May your peace abound! I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion will be forever'" (Daniel 6:25-26).* "All the peoples, nations and men..." would have included the area in which Buddha lived, so it is quite likely that Buddha had some knowledge of these events.

Around this time, Siddhartha was being educated by AlarakKalamaganta and UttakakRamabotra. The chief administrator for this region would have been none other than Daniel, also known as Belteshazzar. It is he who had prophesied and written about the Savior who was to come some 500 years later.

### **Buddha and Christ**

Buddhists believe one must do "merit" in order to improve one's life. But they know that people sin, and none can ever do enough merit to cover their sins. So sin continues since no one is able to have enough merit to cover sin for himself and others. That is, unless someone could be so perfect that he could cover for himself and others.

In 531 B.C., records show that Buddha began his special ministry. He always claimed he was but a mere man, and recognized the problem of sin for himself and all mankind. It is worthy of note that the Buddhist Scriptures of Cambodia contain a prophecy regarding a "Holy One" to come, who would lead people away from the old way and introduce a new way.

"When Buddha was traveling and living in this world,

there was an old Brahman priest who wore white robes who asked the Buddha, 'How will all men and all Brahman continue in their merit-making so as to escape the results of sin?'" Buddha went on to explain that even the most extreme number of prayers and acts of benevolence would not suffice. "The old Brahman priest asked further, 'What are we all to do to be saved?'" Buddha went on to explain there was no way this could be done. He said, "I have given up my high position and entered the priesthood. I considered that even though I am good, I would have only a very small amount of merit at the end of the year. If I was given the same amount of merit for 100,000 epochs and live 10 more lifetimes, I would not be saved from sin's results even once."

"The Old Brahman priest asked further, 'So what should we all do?' The Buddha answered, 'Keep on making merit and look for another Holy One who will come and help the world and all of you in the future.' Then the old Brahman priest asked, 'What will the characteristics of the Holy One be like?' The Buddha answered him, 'The Holy One who will keep the world in the future will be like this: in the palm of his hands and in the flat of his feet will be the design of a disk, in his side will be a stab wound; and his forehead will have many marks like scars.'" *(Permission was given to copy these Buddhist Scriptures from Wat Phra Sing ChiangMai Province by PhraSriwisutthiwong in Bangkok, Thailand. "It is guaranteed that this copy is accurate according to the original, that there is no error in transmission, which is in the book of the district headman, the religious encyclopedia volume 23, book #29. This inquiry was made on October 13, 1954 A.D. [Buddhist era 2497]"*

Buddha's description of the wounds on the Holy One clearly coincides with the wounds Christ suffered,



with his hands and feet pierced with nails (**John 20:25**), his brow suffering a crown of thorns (**John 20:2**), and a spear thrust into his side (**John 20:34**)

Thus we see that Buddha's teachings contained the concept of a coming savior, "Sira-Adia-Meetrey." That name is a combination of titles meaning the Almighty or Head God of the Universe, and the Lord of Mercies. W. G. Singleton, who has spent much time in Cambodia among the Buddhists, believes the coming of this Great God was originally conceived to come in about 500 years, which coincides with Daniel's prophetic timetable. At first, Buddha's teachings were orally transmitted, but during the Maurya Dynasty or Empire, a later disciple, Raja Asoka (274-232 B.C.), commissioned an evangelistic mission to Tibet, China and Southeast Asia. Buddha's teachings were committed to manuscripts and sent by ship from Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, the ship sank, and it was some time before the manuscripts were salvaged.

By the time the manuscripts were recovered, some of the ink was smudged and in some places difficult to read. Instead of reading "500 years," the rewritten manuscripts now read "5,000 years." Despite this, current manuscripts still maintain that the religion of Buddha would have lasted only 500 years, that is, until the coming of the Great Savior.

Note and compare the teachings of Buddha with what is said about Christ.

(1) Buddha taught that Sira-Adia-Meetrey (shortened to Si-A-Meetrey) is the "Prince of Peace." *This is one of the titles of Jesus* (**Isaiah 9:6**).

(2) Buddha claimed the coming one would be "the way" and "the truth." Jesus claimed this for himself in **John 14:6**: "*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but*

*through Me.*"

(3) Buddha taught that Si-A-Meetrey would be represented by a lion. The apostle John refers to Christ in similar words in **Revelation 5:5**: "*the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David...*"

(4) Buddha taught that the one coming was the only one who could forgive sins. We know this is true about Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed for sin. "*and the blood of Jesus (God's) Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (**I John 1:9**).

(5) Buddha taught that the one coming would be "the first and the last." This is exactly what Jesus claimed for himself. "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end*" (**Revelation 22:13**)

(6) Buddha taught his disciples to seek and obey "Dhamma," referring to the "word" and the "way." The apostle John identifies Christ by these exact words. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (John 1:1, 14). And in #2, we have already noted that Christ said he was "the way."

(7) Buddha claimed that "Dhamma" is "light." "*Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world"*" (John 8:12).

(8) Buddha instructed his disciples to keep the law until Si-A-Meetrey would come in some 500 years. It was in that time period after Buddha that Jesus came.

(9) Buddha taught that Si-A-Meetrey's conquering armies would come from the "west" (that would be from Israel going east into Buddha's territory), with weapons of love, peace, kindness and mercy. The disciples in the early years carried the gospel throughout the world, and even in the first generation



of the church, the apostle Paul claimed it had been “preached in all creation under heaven” (**Colossians 1:23**).

### **Buddha’s Acknowledgement of a Need For A Savior**

Near the time of Buddha’s death in 483, B.C., The Enlightened One told his followers, “Regardless of how many laws you have kept, or even if you pray five times a day, you cannot be free from your sins. Even though you burn yourself, even though I become a hermit or am reborn another ten times, I shall also not be saved” (*Manuscript, Praising Temple, Chiangmai, Thailand*). Buddha stated that he was not a god, but just a man, a truth seeker. At his death, he taught there would be a future Messiah, “Lord of Mercies,” who would free men from their sins.

Buddha stated, “He is the Lord of Mercies. His name shall be called King of Kings, the Lord of Lords. He is all knowing, all wise. He knows all that is in the human heart. He is Lord of all the angels and of all humans. No one is greater than He” (*Sutrapridot 3:107*). He further stated concerning the Lord of Mercies that “...His side has a wound where he was pierced, and his forehead has many scars. He will carry you to heaven where you will find the triune God. Thus give up following the old ways. A spirit from heaven will come and dwell in your heart” (*Manuscript, Praising Temple, Chiangmai, Thailand*).

It is obvious to anyone acquainted with the Bible that all these things are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul refers to Christ as “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (I Timothy 6:15). The writer of Hebrews declares his ascendancy over angels: “*having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day*

*have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son?”* (**Hebrews 1:4-5**).

We know that at the crucifixion of Christ a crown of thorns was placed on his brow, which would have produced scarring (**Matthew 2:29**), and that a soldier pierced his side with a spear (**John 19:34**). As we read through the book of **Acts**, we find repeated references to the Christians being filled with the Spirit, as in **13:52**: “*And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.*”

Truly, Jesus Christ is the Savior of the World, and we are enjoined to submit to his authority in obedience to his word, commonly called “The New Testament.”

### **Accepting Christ**

The primary commands concerning accepting Christ are clearly revealed and easy to comprehend.

(1) Christ said we must believe that he is the one promised from ages past—the Son of God and the Savior of the world. “*Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins*” (**John 8:24**).

(2) Repentance from sin, turning from sinful ways to serve Christ is also required. “*I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish*” (**Luke 13:3**).

(3) We must not be ashamed to confess our belief, but be willing to let others know who and what we are. “*Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven*” (**Matthew 10:32-33**).

(4) The final step that places us in a relationship with Christ and removes our sins is baptism or immersion in water. “*He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be*



condemned” (Mark 16:16); “Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16).

(5) Following our baptism, we then are called upon to live a faithful life in hope of our final reward in heaven. “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

**NOTE:** The facts about Buddha and some references to his teachings quoted herein were edited for accuracy by Setha ViryakBanditor (former Chief Priest of Buddhist Monks) and Pro-Akrato (former Buddhist Priest). The citations concerning Buddha’s conversation with the Brahman priest were referred to earlier.)

*“If you truly believed Buddha, you would believe Jesus; for he wrote about Jesus”* (Setha ViryakBanditor (former Chief Priest of Buddhist Monks)

*“Jesus calls us to come to Him. Buddha told us when we find Jesus to give up the old way and follow the Lord. If you are truly Buddhist, you will listen to Buddha’s last words on his death bed.”* (Pro-Akrato, former Buddhist Priest)

*“If you fully understand the Buddhist faith, you will become a Christian”* (Beng Heng, former Buddhist).

## AVOID EMPTY PURSUITS

There are many passages in the book of Proverbs that condemn laziness. However, the wise man also explained that one could fill his life with activity and still end up in the same state of poverty as the lazy person.

The wise man wrote, “He who tills his land will have plenty of food, but he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty” (Proverbs 28:19). Both individuals in this verse were active and putting effort into whatever task was before them. However, one would have “plenty” while the other would find himself in “poverty.”

The difference between these two individuals was not in their effort but in what they focused on in their effort. The first person focused on work that would allow him to provide for himself and his family. The second person focused on work that was worthless and unprofitable.

While we certainly want to avoid laziness, we also need to be careful not to waste our time and energy on activities that do not amount to anything. This does not mean we cannot enjoy hobbies or do fun things, but we first need to make sure we take care of our primary responsibilities.

So avoid empty pursuits. Not all effort is worthwhile. It is possible to exhaust ourselves with activity and still fail to fulfill the responsibilities we have in life.

–Andy Sochor

## Discussion Of First Corinthians 11:2-16

The topic for discussion in this section is a continuation of what was discussed in the previous edition –the head covering of I Corinthians 11. Is it a command that is binding today or is it just a custom that is no longer binding? The two brothers replied to each other's article. Both articles are published here for the consideration of the readers. Everyone is encouraged to study both articles with their Bibles. If you missed the January – March, 2023 edition, you can download it via [www.unmaskingsophistry.com/downloads](http://www.unmaskingsophistry.com/downloads)

### Response to Brent Sharp's Second Article

**By William J. Stewart | Ontario, Canada**

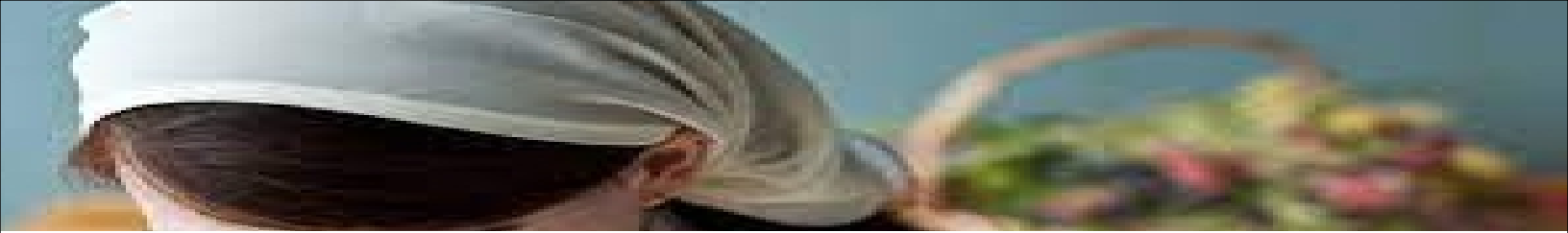
Our brother is adamant that prior to the 20th century, nowhere in all of “Christendom” (in fact, he said “in the entire universe”) was there any interpretation on Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians 11 except that women should have long hair and be covered in worship and men should have short hair and bare heads in worship. I commend his zeal, but his claim is indefensible. He cites several 17th through 19th century commentators who agree with his position, but that is hardly proof that no one in almost two thousand years has believed something different on the topic. His claim and his evidence are disproportionate.

Understanding Paul’s “no such custom” statement in verse 16 is important. Brother Sharp’s explanation is the church does not have a custom of women not having their heads covered in the assembly. If the universal practice of the church is that women must wear head coverings in the assembly, would it not have been more prudent for the apostle to state such rather than use a messy double negative? We have no such custom of people not doing this. The apostle said the church does not have a custom (Greek, sunetheia, a habit or routine) of women wearing head coverings – it was not a universal command. In fact, despite our brother’s claims, there is no commandment anywhere in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 11 included)

for women to wear a head covering in the assembly. The multiple arguments Brent refers to in our text are support of the universal truth which the text is truly about – the distinct roles of men and women. 1 Corinthians 11 no more commands head coverings than 1 Corinthians 16 commands us to kiss one another, or John 13 commands us to engage in foot washings.

Brother Sharp stresses that when Paul gives instructions which are not binding, he will specifically state so, and furthermore, will distinguish his words from those given by inspiration. If our brother’s observation is true, then the command to greet one another with a holy kiss is binding today (1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; Romans 16:16). In no “holy kiss” text does Paul identify the practice as his unbinding uninspired instruction. Using our brother’s reasoning, he must conclude that the holy kiss was not a societal custom but a universal divine commandment. Does our brother impose the holy kiss on brethren? If not, why not?

Based on Paul’s condemnation of homosexuality in Romans 1, our brother says the word “nature” refers to “God’s created order,” and thus surmises that it is inherently wrong for men to have long hair. I am curious, did the Gentiles by “God’s created order” do



the things in the Law (Romans 2:27)? Did God not spare the Jews because of their innate essence (Romans 11:21) or was it against “God’s created order” to receive the Gentiles (Romans 11:24)? Are we inherently children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3)? Each of these texts uses the same Greek word for “nature.” The issue is not as easy as saying the word nature refers to “God’s created order.” We have noted the Nazirite vow which required a man to have long hair (Numbers 6:1-5). Our brother calls this an exception. Did God violate His own “created order,” commanding men to do what He had already deemed sinful? In Romans 1, the word nature certainly refers to inherent design, but such is not the case in the other texts mentioned above, nor in 1 Corinthians 11:14. Commenting on the word nature in Ephesians 2:3, C.G. Caldwell stated: “...the word nature (phusei) refers to one’s acquired nature through habitual regular practice. For example, Paul said, ‘Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?’ (1 Cor. 11:14). Such instruction is not the result of genetics but of social acceptance and practice.”

In 1 Corinthians 11:14, Paul urged the Corinthians to consider what was the accepted practice in their culture. It was socially acceptable for women to have long hair and men to have short hair. Why? Because God had inherently and universally made it so? No, because that was their common practice. Now, does that mean any social custom is OK? No, if it violates God’s law, then it is wrong, regardless how widespread a practice might be. But there is no commandment of God condemning long hair on men or short hair on women.

Our brother dismissed evidence that there is no universal or inherent link between head coverings and submission, and then mockingly asked if we could

ditch the use of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine in the Lord’s Supper for the same reason. The difference is this: God commanded the use of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine for the Lord’s Supper, He has not commanded women to wear head coverings in the assembly of the saints. He ignored evidence presented of men serving before the Lord with their heads covered (Exodus 28:3-4; 29:9), which he says is inherently sinful. In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul acknowledged a custom and urged the Corinthians to recognize that violating the custom would bring dishonour to them. However, he made it clear regarding the covering and uncovering of heads and the length of hair, the Lord’s church has “no such custom.”

Allow me to close with this observation: even if 1 Corinthians 11 were a command for women to wear head coverings, it would not be fulfilled in the assembly of the saints. The women in the context are praying and prophesying (verse 5). In 1 Corinthians 14:34, the apostle said women were to keep silent in the churches, that is, they were not permitted to pray or prophecy in the assembly. Logic dictates Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 cannot be about the assembly of the saints.

#### **Works Cited**

Caldwell, C.G. “Colly,” **Ephesians, Truth Commentary Series, p. 73.**

## Discussion Of First Corinthians 11:2-16

### Response to William Stewart's Second Article

By Brent Sharp | Arkansas, USA

In his second article Brother Stewart spends his first three paragraphs discussing the holy kiss and foot washing, emphasizes that both those were customs of a certain time and place, and apparently draws the conclusion this proves Paul's instructions in I Corinthians 11:2-16 are likewise only local customs limited to Corinth in the first century. Our brother's logic is, however, quite unsound in this matter.

First of all, Paul is speaking by inspiration, with apostolic authority, giving a series of direct commands as to the conduct of the members of the church. It is not my responsibility to prove that these commands are not just a local custom; if a brother is going to reject these commands for such a reason it is his responsibility to prove beyond any shadow of a doubt that such is the case. Would Brother Stewart apply the same reasoning to Paul's commands concerning the Lord's Supper and social meals immediately following? If someone else did so, how could he object? Would Brother Stewart apply the same reasoning to Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to sing? How can he object to those who introduce instruments using the same line of reasoning? Would Brother Stewart apply the same reasoning to Paul's prohibition of women teachers? Already many, including brethren, assert this, too, is just a "local custom" of time and place Paul is referring to in I Corinthians 14. How can Brother Stewart correct them?

Brother Stewart is likewise concerned about my "broad statement" concerning the wearing of the head covering by women for 18 centuries. I would like to remind Brother Stewart that sources such as

StudyLight.org and esword are readily available. Early church historians, including Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus of Rome, Origen of Alexander and John Chrysostom, among myriad others, spoke definitively on the issue. I listed numerous historians and word scholars previously on the matter; I could continue on more or less indefinitely were we not constrained by the number of words to be published in these articles. Once again, prior to the 19th century there was no disagreement, and not until the 20th did the practice of ignoring Paul's instructions in this passage gain a majority practice in the West.

I did indeed refer to Brother Willis' commentary on this passage, and especially for the reason that although he shares Brother Stewart's position, he concedes in his writings on this passage that it was indeed the universal practice of the first century church for women to be covered and men uncovered. Brother Stewart also seems quite concerned that this is the only instance we have recorded in the New Testament of this command, which I concede. And what of it? God gave a direct command through His apostle and had it recorded for us in this book. How many times must He do so before the command is valid? I maintain that number is one. If God's giving the command one time is not enough for Brother Stewart then perhaps he could enlighten us as to how many times a command must be given to be valid, and by what hermeneutic he has arrived at such a conclusion. I suppose that could prove an interesting topic for a follow on debate.

Now Brother Stewart is grammatically perplexed by his misperceived double negative. "We have no such

custom” means we (the apostles and all other congregations) have no (do not have what you do) such custom (a custom of allowing bareheaded women or covered men in the church). If our brother is still concerned about a possible “double negative” I encourage him to familiarize himself with the wonderful “neither-nor” construction; as in we neither teach that women may be uncovered nor do we allow men to wear hats.

Now Brother Stewart is disappointed in my time spent on verses 2-15. This is easy to explain; those verses are clear instructions and should be followed in all times and places throughout the world. I’m sure Brother Stewart understands that this passage requires men to abstain from wearing a head covering in church and to have short hair, and for women to do the opposite. If we agree on that then there is no reason to spend time on it other than to evade the true point of disagreement, which is whether this is just a matter of local custom. It is not.

Brother Stewart also dismisses the idea that the abolition of the women’s head covering in the West, specifically the United States, was in any way connected to the rise of feminism. On this he should have done more reading before speaking on the matter. The Brother Johnson he quotes did indeed say that this was a matter of custom, but then went on to say women in the U.S. ought to wear a covering because that was still the custom; Brother Johnson wrote this in the latter half of the 19th century. The next great opponent of the head covering, McGarvey, conceded that it was indeed a universal command, but that we have now outgrown it; a position which he also applied to Paul’s teaching on women in I Corinthians 14, in which he argued women of exceptional ability should now be able to take leading teaching roles in the church. Additionally, C.R.

Nichol, in his book “God’s Woman” openly rejected the Biblical pattern for male headship in the home as well as the church, and in so doing went out of his way to attack the head covering as sinful in and of itself.

Brother Stewart has spoken much of the principal of headship in I Corinthians 11, but the fact of the matter is that in most Western countries, including the U.S., that principal has been abandoned, including in most public worship. At the same time this abandonment took place, so to, for the first time in history, was Paul’s instruction from this passage abandoned. Judge for yourselves indeed.

## BOOKS



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# 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 debate with Julian Hunt of the Christian church, one of the very conservatives of the Christian church group, in a discussion was held in Lexington, Kentucky, back in 1956, W. Curtis Porter and Julian Hunt were discussing the matter of instrumental music. Hunt introduced a number of scriptures, and he had an argument that goes this way: Things mentioned in the New Testament are for three purposes—either to approve, to condemn, or to neutralize. Those were the three points of his argument. Things were introduced either to condemn, approve or to neutralize. And he gave a few instances in which the term music is mentioned in the New Testament, in which it was condemned, and all the others, he gave as examples of approval. And among those by which he had the matter of approval stamped to it was found in Revelation 18, where he found the harpers and trumpets, and those making music on the trumpets and harps, and so on. Hunt argued that here is something that God approved. Here is instrumental music. Porter said, "Julian, did you not know that in Revelation 18 there are harps, trumpets, and all that he saw were in Babylon? And that in the very beginning of that chapter, Babylon is described as the hold of every unclean beast and defiled thing, foul spirit and things of that kind? And yet you say there is the authority for music in the church." Hunt came back and said, "Yes, I knew that. Certainly, Babylon represents the apostate church and Catholicism. I know that. But, the statement says that the sound of the trumpet shall be heard no more at all

in her, and God took instruments out of Babylon where they did not belong and placed them in the church where they did belong." Porter responded, "Well, in that very same chapter, the statement is made that the light of the candle shall be seen no more in all of thee. Of course, I guess the candles, the Catholics have that in the wrong place, and we can take that from the Catholic church and put it in the church of the Lord, because the candlelight is not to be seen anymore there. And furthermore, the voice of the bride and bridegroom shall be heard no more at all in thee. Be no more marrying in the Catholic church, not only the priests, but all of it is to be taken away from that point." Hunt came back in his next speech and said, "Brother Porter, I am astonished that you did not know that the Bridegroom was the Lord. The Lord is the Bridegroom." Porter said, "The very idea, the Lord, the bridegroom, and the Lord in Babylon, the Lord in the Catholic church?" Hunt replied, "Yes, the church went into apostasy and the Lord went with it. But He came out in the days of the Reformation Movement when Luther began to prevail in his opposition to Catholicism. He came out with Martin Luther." The Lord stayed in apostasy a long, long time.

# CHURCH HISTORY

## The Union of Church and State

By Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

*While the peace enjoyed by Christians in the fourth century was certainly a blessing, there was also trouble that came with it. As Christianity became the official religion, there were many worldly people who wanted to join the church without ever converting to Christ. This resulted in worldly and pagan influences within the church.*

In our previous article, we discussed the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. This was a gathering of church leaders from across the Roman Empire who came together to discuss various issues that were affecting the church at that time. This first ecumenical council was called by Constantine, who ruled as emperor of Rome from 306-337 AD.

The involvement of the Roman emperor in organizing this gathering of church leaders to form a consensus on the church's "official" position on certain matters brings up an important question: What is the proper relationship between the *church* and the *state*? Though the circumstances were different, Jesus did address this concept during His earthly ministry:

*"Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap Him in what He said. And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. Tell us then, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?'*

*"But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, 'Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the coin used for the poll-tax.' And they brought to Him a denarius. And He said to them, 'Whose likeness and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' Then He said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's.' And hearing this, they*

*were amazed, and leaving Him, they went away"*  
(Matthew 22:15-22).

There are two points that can be made from this passage. The first is that God's people are to submit to those who are in positions of civil authority, which includes paying taxes. Paul also gave this instruction in his letter to the saints in Rome (Romans 13:1, 6-7).

However, a second point – and one that is often overlooked – is that the church and the state are to be *separate* entities. We have obligations to rulers and to God, but they are not the same. What we "*render to Caesar*" is not the same thing that we "*render to God*."

The Lord promised to build His church (Matthew 16:18), purchased it with His blood on the cross (Acts 20:28), and established it on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41, 47). God also ordained civil authorities to fulfill a particular role in punishing evildoers and protecting the innocent (Romans 13:1-4). Yet He intended them to remain *separate* entities. However, the effort to bring them together would have a terrible impact on the church.

### **The First "Christian" Emperor**

Constantine is known as the first "Christian" emperor on account of his conversion. As he fought for control of Rome in 312 AD, he claimed that he saw a vision of a cross in the sky with the words, "By this conquer." When he was victorious, he attributed his success to God. He then adopted the symbol of the cross as a standard for his armies. From this point, Constantine considered himself – and was considered by many – a

convert to Christianity. However, he put off baptism until he was on his deathbed.

[Note: Because of his delay in baptism, Constantine's "conversion" would have been a change of *heart*, not a change of *state*. In other words, without being baptized into Christ to have his sins washed away (cf. Romans 6:3-4; Acts 22:16), he would not have been added by God to the Lord's church (cf. Acts 2:41, 47). So when we talk about his conversion in this article, we are referring to the change of heart he had, not a time when he put on Christ in baptism.]

Regardless of whether Constantine's conversion was genuine or not, it would result in a significant change in the relationship between the church and the Roman Empire. Some of these changes were positive – both for the church and the empire – yet there were negative effects from this as well.

### **Positive Effects on the Church**

Throughout much of the history of the early church, Christians were persecuted by the Roman Empire. However, with Constantine's supposed conversion, imperial persecution ceased. In 313 AD, the Edict of Milan was issued. This granted Christians the legal right to worship God and organize churches. It even returned property that had been taken from them.

With the end of persecution, Christians no longer had to meet in hiding. They now had the freedom to worship God without hindrance – part of the "*tranquil and quiet life*" for which Paul said we should pray (1 Timothy 2:1-2). This allowed church buildings to be restored and reopened.

Because Christianity was now openly practiced and even accepted by the emperor, heathenism was discouraged. However, this would lead to a different problem which we will notice in a moment.

### **Positive Effects on the State**

In addition to having a positive effect on the church, there was a benefit to the Roman Empire as well. In his book, *Church History*, John D. Cox summarized what he called "the good results to the state which came as a consequence of Constantine's conversion" (p. 37). These were:

1. Crucifixion was abolished as a method for executing criminals.
2. Infanticide was repressed.
3. The practice of slavery may not have been eliminated, but it was modified. Slaves received more humane treatment and were given legal rights which they never had before.
4. Gladiator contests were suppressed.

What do all of these have in common? They all represent a greater value being placed on the sanctity of human life. This should be expected as the influence of Christianity spread. The Scriptures teach that all men are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and that God is willing to welcome each person to Him (Acts 10:34-35). Paul told the Colossians that in Christ "*there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all*" (Colossians 3:11). As the message of the gospel was able to be taught more openly, the result was a more civilized society as more people embraced the teachings of Christ.

### **Negative Effects on the Church**

Even though heathenism may have been discouraged (as we mentioned earlier), it did not go away. Instead, as Cox noted, "Many passed from heathenism to Christianity by no other conversion than a mere change of name" (*Church History*, p. 37). Since Christianity had become the official State religion,

many were seeking membership without being truly converted to Christ. In describing the impact this had on the church, Dr. Jesse Lyman Hurlbut said this:

“The ceasing of persecution was a blessing, but the establishment of Christianity as the State religion became a curse. Everybody sought membership in the church, and nearly everybody was received. Both good and bad, sincere seekers after God and hypocritical seekers after gain, rushed into communion. Ambitious, worldly, unscrupulous men sought office in the church for social and political influence.” (*The Story of the Christian Church*)

This also led to various pagan practices creeping into the worship of the church, including images of saints and martyrs being displayed and eventually worshiped, turning the Lord’s Supper from a memorial into a “Eucharistic” sacrifice, the veneration of the Virgin Mary, and more.

### Summary

While the peace enjoyed by Christians in the fourth century was certainly a blessing, there was also trouble that came with it. As Christianity became the official religion, there were many worldly people who wanted to join the church without ever converting to Christ. This resulted in worldly and pagan influences within the church.

Besides this, what Constantine did as emperor in uniting the church and the state would have terrible consequences in the future. Even though both institutions were established or ordained by God and had their own role to play in His plan, the Lord intended them to be two separate entities. By merging them, Constantine put the church on the path which would eventually see it develop into the Roman Catholic Church. We will discuss this further in the next article.

## TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE

The wise man wrote, “*Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart*” (Ecclesiastes 4:9).

These verses are often applied to marriage. While an application can be made there, it is not limited to the marriage relationship.

God created us to be social creatures. Relationships are valuable for our emotional and mental well-being. Yet these verses speak of the practical benefits we receive from others – more or better work can be done, assistance can be offered, and threats can be avoided or withstood. If we cut ourselves off from others because we think we do not need anyone else, we miss out on these benefits.

So remember that two are better than one. God created us and knows our abilities and limitations. Rather than thinking we can go it alone, we need to surround ourselves with those who can support, assist, and encourage us, just as we can do for them.

–Andy Sochor

# BARBS WITH A POINT

## Letter To the Editor

*The following letter was sent to the editor of this journal and we wish to publish it here.*

Greetings bro Leslie from the US  
Hope you are doing well.

I have read in Unmasking Sophistry the article: The Deity of Christ: Refuting Some False Arguments and watched the YouTubes with the other two brothers and the other articles and they are very scriptural and well written.

Back in August when I was listening to the replay of one of their Zoom lessons on the Father and son, I was knocked off my feet when I heard bro Henry state that Jesus was created with a beginning with Bro Frias backing him up which I knew this was unscriptural, and being in the Church over 50 years, I have never heard a Church of Christ minister ever advocate that Christ the Son of God is a creation or a creature, and that has perplexed my spirit ever since.

I had to leave a congregation long ago, which died out when the preacher got unscriptural like this and when us members tried to correct him with the scriptures, and he would not repent, so I see the same pattern especially with Bro Henry, something is going on with him, they have forgotten who redeemed us from our sins and it is not anything or anyone created, and the dangerous thing, not only is this brother a preacher, but an elder, so that congregation is not fed right.

I have heard them slander you on the same April radio program, call you a blasphemmer, as well as the rest of us for not going along with them, and accuse you of accepting money, reading other men's books, - regardless this doesn't matter to the subject. You are trying to correct them with the scripture, and they don't want to be corrected, and they won't so much as publicly debate you or anyone else that is trying to challenge them, and a lot of us have been trying to get

them to debate this publicly.

They keep hiding behind their microphones, and Zoom classes, which I do not participate with them anymore, for they know they don't have any ground to stand on, and they will be in trouble on the judgement day when they and us will face that same Jesus that they say was created, so they must repent of this, and we are praying on their behalf.

These brothers keep twisting Psalm 82:6, John 1:1-3 and II Corinthians 4:3-4, Hebrews 1, and Rev 1:5, which I can't figure out what they mean, and when I am reading the terms:

“my Father is greater,”  
“Father and Son relationship in heaven,”  
“Jesus is the beginning of the creation,”  
“Jesus is the firstborn,”  
“from the bosom of the Father”  
“the image of the Father”  
“made, make, brought forth,”

I do not ever read, see or interpret create, creation, or deity Spirit with a beginning somewhere in eternity anywhere in these biblical terms. Even a small child would understand this.

I did accuse them of preaching Jehovah's Witnesses doctrine, and somehow they deny it and run in another direction, which shows me they are deceived and won't renounce this doctrine, which shows they need to be exposed. These brothers are deceived and are misleading the weaker saints that are not strong in their Bible knowledge.

I have been warning the saints I know about these brothers, and have discussed this with one of the elders at our congregation to warn them, so keep defending the truth as well as the brothers you work

with to expose this false teaching before this spreads further to the brotherhood.

When I sit at the Lord's table to eat and drink the elements, I am remembering the eternal one that came down to redeem us from our sins, not a creature (Romans 1:23).

I have actually asked them who you are remembering at the Lord's table every Sunday and I get a beat around bush type of answer. So right now, I don't consider myself to be in fellowship with them until they repent, and I am done with them, and if they call us blasphemers for not going along with them, so be it. God will have the last say at the judgement. It has been almost a year now since they have been preaching this. These men has to be marked (Romans 16:17; 2 John 1:10), so you and the other brothers out there keep exposing these false teachers.

Encouragement to you and love in Christ.

### HOW MANY ROADS LEAD TO HEAVEN?

On a map, you can see many roads leading to any major city. You can pick whatever route suits you. Many people think the same thing about variety among churches -- "We're all on different roads to the same place," they say. Can such a thing be so?

Do you believe we can follow different roads? What does the Bible say about it? The Bible speaks of only two roads. In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus said, "... *the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.*" Yes, there are different roads, but only one goes to Heaven, and it is narrow.

In John 4, when the woman at the well met Jesus, she

immediately pointed out that her people worshipped differently from His (John 4:19-20). Jesus did not reply that both roads led to the same place -- He said that one road was right and the other was wrong (John 4:22) and that if she wished to please God, her worship must be "in truth" (John 4:24).

In Acts 15:1-31, the apostles disputed with some who believed in Jesus but taught error about what one must do to be saved. Instead of concluding that there were different roads, they gave notice to the churches that one road was right and the other was wrong.

The idea of "different roads" is used to avoid discussing different religious teachings and practices. After all, does doctrine really matter if your attitude is right? Indeed it does. The Bible says that there are doctrines that God hates (Revelation 2:15) and that some doctrines are of demons (I Timothy 4:1). Taking heed to doctrine is necessary for salvation (I Timothy 4:16, II John 9) because obedience to God's "form of doctrine" is what makes one free from sin (Romans 6:17-18). Even many who believe in Jesus are on the wrong road because they do not obey (Luke 6:46, Matthew 7:21-23).

Multiple roads result when men choose their own ways, but only God's way is right. The "different roads" philosophy has led churches to abandon the question of what is right, and instead accept a wide diversity of beliefs. But we should not be ashamed to say that some beliefs are right, and others are wrong, because that is what God says. "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*" (Proverbs 14:12). If people are on different roads, they are not all headed for Heaven.

by Erin Percell

# BARBS WITH A POINT

## Faith Under Fire

By Jefferson David Tant | Tennessee, USA

Among the various threats we face in our nation today is the role of the government in seeking to quash or eliminate any semblance of the religious freedom that has characterized our nation from the day of our founding fathers. This is evident in different areas of our public life, and should cause us to be in continual prayer for our nation and its leaders, even as Paul encouraged us in I Timothy 2:1-2: “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”

In this article, we will note various examples of “Faith Under Fire.”

In 2013, President Obama began a war on Christian members of the military with the proclamation that “Religious proselytization is not permitted within the Department of Defense...Court Marshals will be decided on a case-by-case basis.” Under this edict, Christian servicemen or chaplains could not “talk about Jesus,” “quote the Bible,” or “share their faith.” Furthermore, if an atheist, homosexual or non-Christian was offended in any way, the Christian member who caused the offense could be punished. My understanding is that these policies remain in force today.

The then president and his anti-Christian friends in the House and Pentagon demanded that military chaplains facilitate homosexual marriages or face penalties. In 2013 Senior Master Sergeant Phillip Monk was punished and relieved of duty after 19 years of good service when his openly lesbian commanding officer Major Valenzuela objected to his Biblical views on marriage. She wanted him “severely punished” for

his religious objection to homosexuality.

Navy Chaplain LCDR Wes Modder was fired by his commander after quoting a Bible verse to a homosexual sailor who asked him what the Bible said about homosexuality. The sailor then complained, even though he had been asked the question about the Bible, and the chaplain suffered termination.

Lance Corporal Monifa Sterling was a Marine stationed at Camp Lejeune. She posted a Bible verse near her desk which read, “No weapon formed against you shall prosper” (Isa. 54:17) The next morning the verse was in the trash can, and then she was court-martialed. An appeal was made which invoked the First Amendment right of religious freedom, but it was denied and she got her bad conduct discharge and a reduction in rank,

Sadly, the Air Force is violating Federal Law DoDI 1300.17 which plainly allows freedom of religious expression in all branches of military service. Some anti-Christian complainers made a complaint against some Academy cadets who wrote some positive, encouraging Bible verses on their personal whiteboards, and thus were pressured by their chain of command to erase the Bible.

Under policies initiated by Obama which are still in force, chaplains have faced ridicule and have lost the ability to serve their nation because they chose to obey God rather than man, and have been charged with “being guilty of treason,” “committing acts of spiritual rape,” and even “assault,” and “Declaring them ‘enemies of the Constitution.’”

The story of Chaplain Gordon Klingenschmitt is well-known to many. He was a Navy Chaplain when the order was given that any chaplain who prayed in

Jesus' name outside of a Sunday Chapel could be court-marshalled. He did pray in public using Jesus' name, and was honorably discharged, but lost his 16-year career and his pension.

But the story doesn't end there. 520 newspapers and over 300,000 citizens and 35 pro-family groups rallied to his cause and petitioned the President to reverse the Navy's policy of targeting believers in Christ. In time Congress did comply and restored the rights of chaplains to freely express their faith and to pray in Jesus' name. And it is my understanding that Klingenschmitt was eventually exonerated.

This was only one victory as opposed to numerous assaults by the atheist agents of Satan who are seeking to make our nation "One Nation Under Satan" rather than "One Nation Under God." This latter phrase originated on June 14, 1954, when President Dwight Eisenhower signed a bill to insert the phrase "One Nation Under God" into the U.S. Pledge of Allegiance that children recited every morning in school. Sadly, that phrase has been removed in many places today.

Dr. Ben Carson, whom my wife I met some years ago, said "As Christians, the Bible calls us to be salt and light to influence our culture."

### **NOT EVERY ACCUSATION IS CREDIBLE**

One of the events that demonstrated the worthlessness of King Ahab and the wickedness of his wife Jezebel occurred when Ahab wanted to acquire a vineyard that was owned by Naboth. Ahab initially offered to give Naboth a "better vineyard" in exchange for it, but Naboth refused to part with it because the vineyard was "the inheritance of [his] fathers" (1 Kings 21:2-3).

When Jezebel saw Ahab "sullen and vexed" over this (1 Kings 21:4), she promised to get the vineyard for him. However, her plan was not to offer an even "better" vineyard to Naboth. Instead, she conspired to have "two worthless men" accuse Naboth of cursing God and the king so that he could be taken out and stoned to death (1 Kings 21:8-10). This happened exactly according to her plan (1 Kings 21:11-14). After Naboth was dead, Ahab took possession of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:15-16).

It is amazing how often this type of thing happens. Many people immediately conclude that a person is guilty just because someone makes an accusation against them. However, there are times when innocent people are falsely accused. Too many are quick to join the wicked accusers rather than defend the innocent.

So remember that not every accusation is credible. Even two or more people may conspire together (as in the example with Jezebel) to distort the truth and bring harm to someone. Justice demands that we keep from getting swept away with the mob (whether in person or online) and join them in their attacks against someone who has done nothing wrong.

—Andy Sochor



# INSTITUTIONALISM

## The History of the Institutional Controversy

By Jefferson David Tant | Tennessee, USA

This is a continuation of the article written by Jefferson David Tant on the history of the institutional controversy which was started in the previous editions.

### World War II

The period of time around W.W. II marked a definite change in the church. For one thing, a generation of respected preachers whose stand for Biblical principles was passing from the earth. In one 18-month period of 1940-41, Daniel Sommer, J. D. Tant, Joe Warlick, and F. B. Srygley died. They were replaced by younger men as editors of religious journals and in other spheres of influence.

Attitudes towards the war itself produced some controversy and change. There had been a strong minority position, mainly through the influence of David Lipscomb, that Christians could not participate in civil government, especially in warfare. In W.W. I, Cordell (OK) Christian College was closed by the local "Defense Counsel" and two young Christians were threatened with execution for their beliefs. But W.W. II produced a different mood and strong patriotism after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. B. C. Goodpasture closed the pages of the Gospel Advocate to any discussion of the matter, which was a portent of things to come. By the middle of the next decade, the pages of this influential journal were likewise closed to any discussion of the issues that were dividing brethren.

### The Post-World War II Era

With the return of GIs from the war, fervor for evangelism grew. Churches and brethren seemed to be willing to try whatever sounded good in spreading the gospel. Thousands of GIs were also going to college on the GI Bill, and the "Christian Colleges" didn't want to be left out, thus the growing appeal for funds from

churches to sustain their growth.

With good intentions, churches were inundated with appeals to support cooperative works in Germany, Italy, and Japan. The work in these countries was "overseen" by churches in Tennessee and Texas, which assumed centralized control over the work done in these countries. This was the beginning of the "sponsoring church" concept, with scores or hundreds of churches sending funds to one eldership, which then had the oversight of whatever work was in their sight.

In time some brethren began to have second thoughts about such cooperative efforts that involved something larger than the local church. Roy Cogdill, Jr., Luther Blackmon, and Yater Tant were forced by conscience to withdraw their support of these schemes and voice their concerns. This was reminiscent of what happened 100 years before when men like Tolbert Fanning and Benjamin Franklin withdrew their support of the missionary societies and became vocal opponents of such works.

For some years Foy E. Wallace, Jr. had published the Bible Banner, but in 1949 closed its pages and revived the Gospel Guardian, which he had published in the 1930s, and asked Yater Tant to become its editor. This paper became a leading influence in the controversies that developed and which came to full bloom in the 1950s. Tant served as editor for 22 years through some turbulent times, and thus a position of leadership was passed on from J. D. Tant to his son Yater. Other papers joined the battle — Preceptor, Searching the Scriptures, and Truth Magazine.



### What Were the Issues?

The proliferation of human institutions and sponsoring church arrangements, all clamoring for church support, set the scene for conflict. Combining this with the post-war prosperity many Christians were experiencing after the struggles of the Depression, the stage is set for differences, disagreement, and division. Soon a national radio and TV program came on the scene. The “Herald of Truth” was looked upon as the “voice” of the churches of Christ, much as the “Lutheran Hour” and the “Catholic Hour” were for their respective church bodies. The 5th & Highland church in Abilene, Texas was the sponsor, and in time came to have over 1,000 churches sending money to it for the program. The problem was that with no denominational hierarchy, how does the program speak with authority for all independent churches of Christ? Furthermore, many saw a problem with a large church with a large budget receiving funds from small churches, some of which could not afford to support a preacher. This is contrary to the principle of those with abundance sending to the aid of those who were lacking, as laid out in II Corinthians 8:13-15.

At first, this program had a different composition. The originators of the program, James Walter Nichols and James D. Williford, came to Yater Tant with the idea of producing professional quality tapes to be sold to churches and aired on local radio stations, paid for by the local church. Tant thought it sounded like a good idea, but the final version was a far cry from what was proposed. It became a “brotherhood” project, overseen by the 5th and Highland elders in Abilene, with money sent to them by hundreds and hundreds of churches around the nation. As stated earlier, many reasoned that since the Catholic Church had a national program, and the Lutheran Church had “The

Lutheran Hour,” why couldn’t the churches of Christ have what amounted to a “Church of Christ” program that spoke for the Church of Christ? Of course, we have no denominational head as the denominations do, so how could one church be the voice of all churches of Christ?

Added to the list of organizations clamoring for church support were homes for unwed mothers, homes for the aged, orphan asylums, publishing ventures, “Cows for Korea,” Gospel Press, and a host of other ventures arising out of the imaginative minds of brethren who wanted to do good. The “Cows for Korea” project arose out of a shortage of cows in Korea, so the plot was hatched for churches to buy cows and send them to Korea.

Opposition began to appear in some of the religious journals. One of the first articles raising doubts was written by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. in the Gospel Guardian in May 1949. Glenn L. Wallace questioned the Herald of Truth in the Guardian in December 1953. He was preaching for the large College Church in Abilene, Texas. Other papers began to publish articles questioning these practices, but it was the Guardian that was the main voice of the opposition as a growing number of brethren began to question the increasing number of centralized projects under the control of a few large, prosperous churches.

The two main organs supporting these ventures were the Gospel Advocate under the editorship of B. C. Goodpasture and the Firm Foundation under the editorship of Reuel Lemmons. Once again the pages of the Advocate were closed to opposing views, thus preventing thousands from having a clear understanding of the issues involved.

Eventually, there were a number of debates on the issues beginning in 1954. Some of these debates were the Holt-Totty debate in Indianapolis, October 1954;



Harper-Tant debates in Lufkin and Abilene, Texas in 1955; Woods-Porter in Indianapolis, January 1956; Cogdill-Woods in Birmingham, November 1957; Wallace-Holt in Florence, Alabama December 1959. These debates reflected scores of debates, hundreds of articles, and untold numbers of discussions brethren have had through the years. Brethren who once stood together for the common faith were now on opposite sides of these issues.

### **The Arguments Advanced by the Non-Institutional Brethren**

In his tract on this subject, Steve Wolfgang well defined the major issues.

A. That God has revealed in Scripture patterns to be followed in the work and worship of the church. Hebrews 8:5

B. That authoritative patterns are expressed in terms of—

1. Generic or specific statements or commands.
2. Examples for churches to follow.
3. Necessary conclusions or implications (Acts 15)

C. That the generic statements or commands allow expedient ways of obeying, while the specific directions are more restrictive and do not allow changes.

D. That the differences between general and specific instructions can be distinguished by common sense principles of interpretation.

E. That there is a difference in individual and church responsibilities in carrying out their respective roles in glorifying God.

F. That the church's treasury is to be used for the purposes of the edification of its members, assisting saints who are in need, and supporting preachers in their proclamation of the gospel.

G. That there is no authority in Scripture for human

organizations or super-church arrangements through which local churches may do their work (II Corinthians 11:8-9; Philippians 4:15-18).

H. That the church Jesus died to purchase is a spiritual institution and was not intended to provide for the recreational or social needs of its members, nor to be a worldwide benevolence organization.

I. That human societies or organizations (hospitals, publishing houses, colleges, etc.) may provide services on a fee-for-service basis, but the Scriptures do not allow for those to become permanent appendages to the church.

J. That individual churches do not compose the universal church as in a denominational structure, but that it is individuals who are the universal church.

K. That there is no provision in Scripture for the universal church to function, for it is a relationship of people rather than a structured organization.

1. The human race exists but has no organizational structure.

2. The human race lives and functions in nations, which have an organizational structure.

3. The universal church exists but has no organizational structure.

4. Its members function in local churches, which have an organizational structure.

### **LISTEN TO THE GOSPEL ON YOUTUBE**

(1) Was Jesus Made God At The Council of Nicea?: <https://youtu.be/aT-WUw759D4>

(2) Refuting Some Jehovah's Witnesses in The Lord's Church: <https://youtu.be/p3apuc1JZGw>

(3) Creature Worship Is Sinful: <https://youtu.be/S7c995AcobU>



# Myth Buster

## Faith or Faithfulness?

By Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

The Bible tells us that God gives each and every Christian a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3). When we complain about the inadequacy of our faith and emphasize on needing more to carry out God's will, we are not really different from the ungrateful servant in the parable of talents (Matt. 25:14-30).

### Introduction

A lot of Christians are living in doubt about the adequacy of the faith that they possess. Many of us are constantly in need of faith and we keep asking for more and more of it. How many times have you caught yourself thinking, "If only I had more faith. Then I could be a better Christian."

Some disciples were a lot like us. They felt that if they could have more faith, they could be better disciples. In Luke chapter 17, Jesus gave His disciples a set of instructions, and they responded in verse 5 "**Lord, Increase our faith!**" In essence, they were saying, "We're not able to do all of this. Our faith is inadequate, please, Jesus, give us more otherwise we will fail!"

Jesus' response to their request is a very interesting one, "*And the Lord said, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you might say to the sycamine tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.*" (vs. 6). When you think about it, this was not the answer the disciples were expecting. They might have expected Jesus to pray for them and to ask God to grant them more faith. But Jesus' answer implies that the disciples did have faith that is at least as small as a mustard seed – a mustard seed being the smallest of all seeds. There can be no increase where there is no possession, a better paraphrase of Jesus' reply might be, "**You do have faith. And even if it is small, you can still do great things!**" In other words, "**You already have faith! You just are not using it!**"

The disciples were asking for the wrong thing. They did not need to increase their *faith* – they needed to increase their *faithfulness*. There is a big difference.

### Faith or Faithfulness?

Faith is trusting in God and His promises; we must trust God to do what He says. Faithfulness, on the other hand, is our response to our faith. It is what we do with our faith. And that is up to us. A Christian's life starts with faith and progresses with faithfulness. The Bible tells us that God gives each and every Christian a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3). When we complain about the inadequacy of our faith and emphasize on needing more to carry out God's will, we are not really different from the ungrateful servant in the parable of talents (Matt. 25:14-30).

In reality, Faithfulness is what builds our faith, there is no shortcut, just like the faithful servant in the parable of talents, when we show faithfulness; we experience an increase in our faith.

Let us consider a few requirements of faithfulness, which can help increase our faith:

- 1. Study the Bible Regularly:** Diligent Bible study is our only way of learning God's will and avoiding error (Acts 17:11). Faithfulness in God's service requires regular, dedicated study of the Scriptures, so we can know how to please God and avoid error (Joshua 1:8; Hebrews 5:12; Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:15; Proverbs 2:1-20; Psalms 19:7-11).
- 2. Pray Frequently:** In prayer, we thank God, praise Him, and ask Him to meet our needs (Acts 2:42).



Prayer is our avenue of speaking to God. When we neglect it, we miss a lot of blessings that he has promised us (Luke 18:1; Ephesians 6:18; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

**3. Attend all the Assemblies of the Local Church:**

New Testament Christians were always recognized as part of a local church - Acts 9:26-28; 11:26; Heb. 13:17. This church must be scriptural in worship, name, organization, salvation, etc.

Local churches should arrange meetings for members to worship God, study His word, and grow in strength and knowledge (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

In addition to the Lord's Supper and giving on the first day of the week, local churches met to study God's word and to sing and pray (1 Cor. 14:15). These last three activities are nowhere specifically limited to any particular day of the week, so the church may arrange meetings for them on any day of the week. Whenever the church arranges to meet, Christians should do their utmost to come to benefit from the study and worship (Heb. 3:12,13; 10:24,25; John 4:24; Eph. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:11; Acts 2:42)

**4. Help Others Learn the Gospel:** When you have been converted, invariably there will be someone else who made some effort to help you learn and obey the truth. Then it becomes your responsibility to help other people to learn and obey (John 1:43-46). Every convert should learn to become a teacher. This may require time, but we can do as Philip did and encourage people to come to someone else who can teach them (Eph. 4:16; Prov. 11:30; 2 Tim. 2:2,24-26; John 4:28-30,39; Heb. 5:12)

**5. Live an Upright Moral Life:** Besides the works of service that we have studied, Christians must work to remove from their lives the immoral conduct that so often characterizes people of the world (Titus 2:11-14).

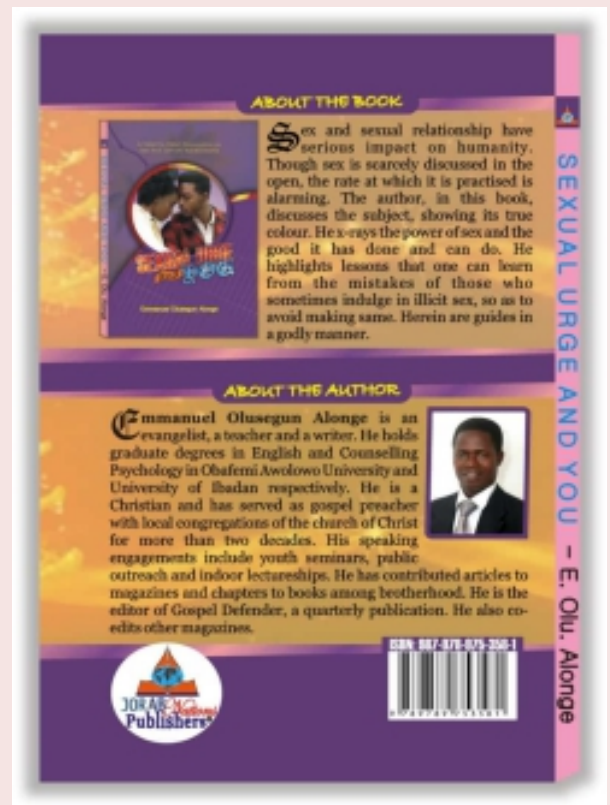
Other passages list other immoral practices that Christians must avoid. If we do commit sin, then we must repent, ask God for forgiveness. (Mark 7:20-23; Rom. 1:26-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11.)

**6. Do ALL of God's Will:** This includes developing good qualities the Lord requires (2 Peter 1:5-11) and eliminating unacceptable conduct, speech, and attitudes. God requires complete and total commitment to serving Him. We must be willing to make any sacrifice necessary to please Him.

**Conclusion**

Faithfulness is an important part of our Christian life. We are to consciously build our faith through faithfulness. Remember, only the faithful shall receive a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

**BOOKS**



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# IDEAL HOME

## A Christian Home

By Kyle Rye | Georgia, USA

I once heard the story about a little boy who was inconsolably crying in the car after leaving worship services one Sunday. His father asked him three times what was wrong, and, finally, the boy replied, “The preacher said he wanted me to be brought up in a Christian home, but I want to stay with you guys!”

Ideally, all homes would be Christian homes because Christian homes are homes that have surrendered to the will and the reign of God. In so doing, they assume some unique attributes, three of which will be mentioned in this article.

### **Christian homes provide a spiritual education.**

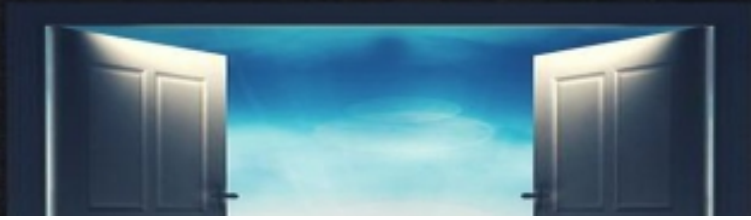
Let us begin by noticing two passages in which Paul addresses Timothy’s spiritual education. The first is 2 Timothy 1:5 where Paul told Timothy, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” The second is 2 Timothy 3:14-15 where Paul instructed Timothy to “continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” From Paul’s words, we can infer that Timothy’s spiritual education was provided by his mother and grandmother since he indicated that Timothy’s faith was inherited from them. We can also infer that the source material for this education was what we call the Old Testament since Paul said that Timothy was “acquainted with the sacred writings.” Finally, we can infer that Timothy’s spiritual education began when he was just a boy since Paul indicated that Timothy’s familiarity with the sacred writings was “from childhood.” All of these statements point to the fact that Timothy’s spiritual

education was provided by his family who began teaching him God’s word when he was still a child.

The family has always been the institution through which spiritual education is to occur. The responsibility of parents providing such education to their children was prescribed in Deuteronomy 6:6-7, where Moses instructed the Israelites to “teach [these words that I command you today] diligently to your children, and...talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” The same responsibility was prescribed to Christian parents when Paul instructed parents, fathers in particular, to “not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). Thus, a Christian home is one in which faith is being developed through an education in God’s word.

### **Christian homes exfiltrate their families from dangerous environments.**

Consider for a moment the family of Lot. Lot followed his uncle, Abraham, to Canaan but eventually chose to relocate to Sodom despite the fact that “the men of Sodom” had a reputation for being “exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord” (Genesis 13:1-13). Eventually, Lot was instructed by God to leave Sodom because of its sinfulness, but Lot hesitated to do so (Genesis 19:15-16). As a result of choosing to live in Sodom and becoming comfortable with the environment of Sodom, Lot became homeless, a widower, and the father of the enemy nations of Israel (Genesis 19:26, 30, 36-38). In one of the most disturbing texts in Scripture, Lot’s two daughters got him drunk so they could use him to father their children (Genesis 19:31-35). Where do you think they learned such sexually immoral



behavior? Likely from the depraved community to which Lot offered his daughters as sexual deterrents in order to prevent the community from raping the messengers of God (Genesis 19:8). Thus, by living in Sodom, Lot exposed his family to a spiritually compromising environment.

In order for us to have Christian homes, we must protect our families from such environments. We need to be willing to exfiltrate our families from environments that may compromise their faith. Paul instructed us to “not be conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2), and John instructed us to “not love the world” (1John 2:15). In order to heed those instructions, we must be willing to make intentional decisions to avoid becoming comfortable with the world, and Scripture consistently recommends flight as the best tactic for combating such comfort (1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22). Thus, parents in Christian homes willingly exfiltrate their family from dangerous environments because failure to do so may result in spiritual compromise. In so doing, we heed the words of Proverbs 27:12, which says, “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.”

**Christian homes correct its members when they are erring.**

Consider for a moment the family of Eli. Eli was a highly respected leader in Israel, but his sons were “worthless,” according to 1 Samuel 2:12. They abused the rights of their role as priests and frequently broke Mosaic Law when it came to how sacrifices were to be made. Eli heard of their “evil dealings” and confronted them, but Scripture indicates that “they would not listen to the voice of their father” (1 Samuel 2:25). At first glance, it would seem as though Eli had fulfilled his parental responsibility by confronting them, but God made it clear that Eli had not done enough.

Through a messenger, God told Eli that he honored his sons more than he honored Him (1 Samuel 2:29), and He told Samuel that He would “punish [Eli’s] house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them” (1 Samuel 3:13). Thus, God was displeased with Eli because he failed to do what was necessary to correct the behavior of his sons. The consequence of his failure was the death of his sons and the demise of his family (1 Samuel 2:30-34).

In order for us to have Christian homes, we must be willing to discipline our children when they do wrong. Disciplining a child is not always easy, it is never enjoyable, but it is necessary. The author of Hebrews indicated that God disciplines His children occasionally, and he compared the Lord’s discipline to that which children receive from their earthly fathers in Hebrews 12:7 when he rhetorically asked, “what son is there whom his father does not discipline?” His words indicate an underlying assumption that parents will discipline their children, and he goes on to indicate why. In Hebrews 12:11 he says, “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” Thus, the objective of discipline is to train the recipient of the discipline, and God expects Christian homes to provide such training as evidenced by Proverbs 22:6 which says, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

Though this is not an exhaustive list of all the attributes of a Christian home, it is a starting point. If you desire for your home to be a Christian home, then start here because Scripture asserts that “unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1).

# Salvation



## Does Acts 2:38 Really Teach That Baptism Is Necessary For Salvation?

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

**Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”  
(Acts 2:38)**

Many teach that the phrase “*for the forgiveness of sins*” in Acts 2:38 means “*because of*” and not “*in order to*.” Hence what Peter was saying on that day was for them to repent and be baptized **because** their sins had already been forgiven. To prove this, notice the supposed parallel example that one preacher gave: *Suppose a doctor says: “Please take an aspirin for a headache,”* does that mean one is to take an aspirin in order to have a headache or one should take an aspirin because one already has a headache? He argues that since taking aspirin for a headache would mean taking aspirin because you already have a headache, then baptize for the forgiveness of sins would mean be baptize because you already have your sins forgiven. Let us quickly examine this argument.

First, if the word “for” in Acts 2:38 means “because of”, that would mean they were to repent because their sins were already forgiven – **hence repentance is EXCLUDED in the requirement to be saved.** Would this preacher admit that the people on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 were already forgiven of their sins before they repented? Well, Luke 13:3 teaches the exact opposite as there is no salvation for anyone who would not repent.

Second, notice that the people asked Peter what to do to be saved on Pentecost day (Acts 2:37). Does it make sense for someone to ask you what to do to be saved (the very question of Acts 2:37), then you tell them two things to do because they are already saved? If “for” means “because of,” in Acts 2:38 then Peter completely ignored their question.

Third, the expression “*for the remission of sins*” is from the Greek phrase “eis aphasis amartion.” A similar expression is found in Matthew 26:28, where we find that Jesus says, “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many, for the **remission of sins.**” There is the very same phrase “eis aphasis amartion” in Acts 2:38 and Matthew 26:28. One is: Be baptized “for the remission of sins,” (Acts 2:38) and the other is: Jesus shed his blood “for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). If it means “because of” in one place, it would certainly mean it in the other. Now, the question is: Did Christ pour out His blood because people’s sins have been forgiven, or in order that people’s sins might be forgiven? If anyone says that Christ poured out His blood because of the forgiveness of sins, such would be saying that sins were forgiven before Christ shed his blood, and the Bible does not teach that (Hebrews 9:22). And if we say that Christ shed His blood to obtain the forgiveness of sins, then we must say that baptism is in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins because it is identically the same phrase without any difference. Hence, the argument that baptism has nothing to do with their salvation in Acts 2:38 is flawed!

Fourth, The Greek word translated “for” in Acts 2:38 is the word eis. This Greek word is used primarily to represent a going into, an indication of purpose, or the going in the direction of a goal. The same Greek word is used in Acts 11:18 when it is said that God granted to the Gentiles “repentance unto life.” If “eis” means “because of”, then “repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18) would mean that they got life or salvation before they





ever repented. Does this even make sense? No!

Fifth, the aspirin example stated above is an unparallel example to the statement in Acts 2:38. Yes, it is true that the statement “*Please take an aspirin for your headache*” does not mean one should take the aspirin to get a headache. He takes an aspirin because he already has a headache. But this is not the way Acts 2:38 reads. Acts 2:38 does not read: “*Repent and be baptized for your sins.*” For the aspirin example to be parallel with the phrase “*for the remission of sins*” in Acts 2:38, it would have to read this way: “*Please take an aspirin for the relief of a headache.*” That way, it would mean that the patient is to take aspirin in order to get rid of his headache just as Acts 2:38 would mean that they were to be baptized to get rid of their sins.

Peter's audience on Pentecost were not composed of critics seeking to justify a doctrine of "faith only." Rather, they were simple, humble people who understood what to do. “*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized, and that day about three thousand souls were added to them*” (Acts 2:41).

### LIFESTYLES OF THE RICH AND FAMOUS

For a moment, think about what's been called “Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous.” You have probably seen the TV program by that name which gives viewers an inside look at the lavish lifestyles of high society. Well, we may think such riches and fame automatically bring lasting happiness, but that's not the full story. For example, Howard Hughes, one of the world's wealthiest men, died a weird recluse. Marilyn Monroe, achieved great fame and fortune, but was often miserable, and apparently died by her own hand. But the list goes on and on, and on. Janis Joplin, Elvis Presley, Rock Hudson, Liberace, professional sports stars, those who have reached

political greatness, wealthy and famous business men, religious leaders, and yes, some well-known Bible characters, etc. The sad end of their lives is a reminder that all that glitters is not gold, and being famous does not bring happiness.

Yes, it's true that material wealth and fame can be a great advantage, but the truth is, there are some things money cannot buy, and fame cannot accomplish. For example, it cannot buy and bring about real contentment, love, true friends, a good marriage, peace, genuine respect and a clear conscience. It cannot buy inner beauty, or character, and most important of all, it cannot assure one a place in Heaven. Luke 12: 15 says: “*Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses.*” Jesus asked: “*For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*” (Matt. 16:26).

It is so important to remember that salvation you can have through Jesus Christ is worth more than all of the wealth and fame one may possess. Salvation does not require material possessions, education, and fame, but it does require the desire to please God and to honestly admit one's own need, and the willingness to do what God demands. So, my friend, you may not be rich and famous, possessing all this world has to offer, but you can, even though you are poor, be “*rich toward God*” (Lk. 12: 21). You can be “*rich in faith*” and love God by obeying Him. Think on these things.

- **Dennis Abernathy**

# SALVATION

## Kindness Is a Virtue

By Jefferson David Tant | Tennessee, USA

*"Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor." (Romans 12:10) "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)*

It is well known that several passages in God's Word mention the virtue of kindness. One that is quite well known is **Galatians 5:22-23**: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."*

There are also passages in the Old Testament where kindness is mentioned. *"He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)*

So, we understand that kindness is a characteristic of Christians. But, to whom are we to show kindness? Obviously we show kindness to our family in the flesh and our family in the Spirit.

**Enemies** -- But there are others who should also be the objects of our kindness. For example, what about our enemies? Christ had a word about this which we can read in **Luke 6:35**: *"But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men."*

It is quite obvious that Christ set the example for us, as we remember some of his last words as He was dying on the cross: *"But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves." (Luke 23:34)* Do you find it difficult to show kindness to those who have wronged you? Probably so. But since God gave us the power to

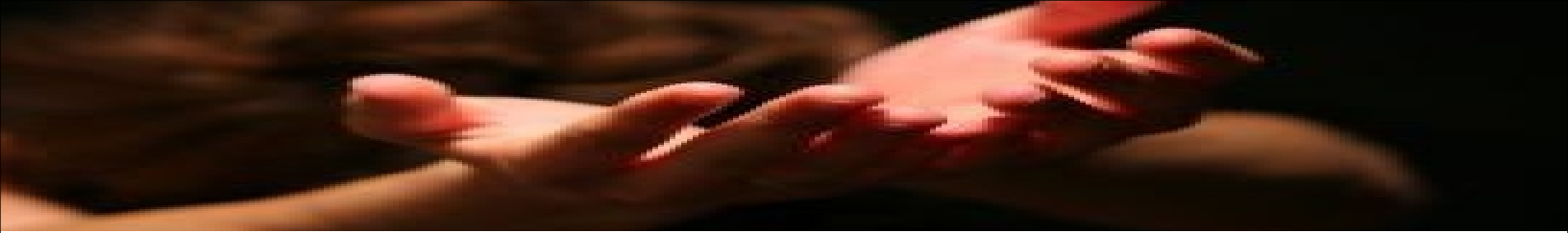
control our emotions, we can have a forgiving spirit.

Christ had more to say about this attitude towards enemies: *"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,... "If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.... "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men." (Luke 6:27, 33, 35).*

Then the words of Christ in **Mark 11:25-26**: *"Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."* Evidently God is serious about the command to show kindness to our enemies.

**Strangers** -- Then, what about strangers? Note Paul's word concerning widows: *"A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work." (I Timothy 5:9-10).*

Then the exhortation in Hebrews 13:2 *"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it."* Do you



remember who came to visit Lot? They were strangers, and he did not know they were angels, but he invited them in and took care of them. “*Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. And he said, “Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant’s house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.” They said however, “No, but we shall spend the night in the square.” Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.*” (Genesis 19:1-3).

John also had some words about strangers: “*I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers.*” (III John 1:4-5).

Have you ever been out in public and noticed a stranger in some difficulty, and offered to help? How about a woman struggling to load groceries from her shopping cart into her car? How about a blind man seeking to cross a busy street? How about a woman, or maybe an elderly man, stopped beside the road due to a flat tire?

When you have strangers visiting the congregation where you attend, do you ever invite them to have dinner with you? My wife and I have been the recipients of such invitations, and it is good to be welcomed by brethren.

**Brethren** -- Is the congregation of which you are a member known for its brotherly kindness? Sunday is a time when brethren are together, and a good time to tell others, “Let’s have lunch together.” Such occasions

help to produce unity, that which binds together a spiritual family.

“*Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.*” (Romans 12:10)  
“*Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*” (Ephesians 4:32).

**And more** -- We could go on and on, but there is one more thing I would like to mention, and that is kindness to animals. I have known of those who have harshly abused animals, and I don’t think that’s what God wants us to do. How do you suppose Christ treated the young donkey that he rode into Jerusalem in what is called “The Triumphal Entry?

“*Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, “FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY’S COLT.”*” (John 12:14-15).

And, of course, through ancient times, the people of God were dependent upon animals for their labor, farm work and transportation.



And finally, here is an act of kindness shown by an employee at a Dunkin’ Donuts shop as a donut is being given to a Raccoon. A motorist was in the drive-thru lane and took a picture of what was happening in front of him. And I don’t think the raccoon was charged for the treat. So...

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## What Is the Proper Way to Refer to a Preacher?

### Question:

My denominational friends refer to their preacher as "Pastor" or "Reverend." What is the proper way to address the preacher, or how do you refer to him as you speak of him to others?

### Answer:

For me, it is easy to answer what I call the preacher who preaches for our congregation. He is about fifty years my junior so I call him David for that is his given name.

David is not a 'pastor', so I don't refer to him in that way. Nor do I call him 'Reverend' for God is the only One who is called 'Reverend' in the Bible and I dare not give that title to a mere man. Even though I respect David for what he does, he preaches the gospel regularly in our assemblies. He also teaches classes in our Bible class assemblies.

It may seem odd to some when they hear you call the preacher by his first name. But why not? If Peter could refer to Paul as 'Paul,' and Paul could refer to Timothy as 'Timothy,' then why can't we use the same terminology when we speak to or of the person that preaches in the congregation of which we are members? I firmly believe that we can, and should. Now, if David happened to be a person that was several years older than myself, I would respectfully refer to him as 'Brother' Deason. This is done with respect to age, but not to put him on a pedestal in a spiritual way. We, as Christians, refer to our brothers and sisters in Christ, as brother so and so or sister so and so.

With regard to the term "Pastor," as it is used in the Bible, it refers to a shepherd or elder of the flock or church. A plurality of pastors, elders, or bishops are those men who meet certain qualifications as are given

in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. They then are appointed to oversee the congregation, especially in Spiritual matters. They can only oversee the congregation of which they are members and not several congregations.

The preacher is not to be referred to as "Pastor" "Reverend" or "Father." In most cases, the preacher is not one of the 'elders' in the congregation. And certainly, he is not in a position to be called "Reverend" because that term is only applied once in all of the Bible and then it refers to God. Then, one is not to be referred to as 'Father' in a religious sense because we are told not to be referred to in that sense Matthew 23:9.

Preachers are referred to as 'evangelists' in the Bible (Acts 21:8; II Timothy 4:5) because he brings the 'good news' (the gospel) to us. The preacher is also referred to as 'minister' which basically means 'servant' (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7). So, it is proper to refer to the preacher by these Scriptural terms. But the terms used to denote the preacher are never designed to "put him on a pedestal" above the other members of the congregation. A preacher's work is done under the oversight of the elders of the congregation for which he preaches. They are responsible to be sure that he preaches the truth as it is found in the Bible, the Word of God.

**Adapted from an article by Clem Thurman  
via Gospel Minutes, Vol. 58, No. 34, Aug. 21, 2009.**

### Source:

<https://www.lavistachurchofchrist.org/cms/what-is-the-proper-way-to-refer-to-a-preacher/>

# ADDENDUM

## GRATITUDE TO ALL THE BRETHREN WHO PAID THEIR LAST RESPECT TO BROTHER HENRY GBAMIS (Snr).



*Aged 91 (1932-2023)*

<sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." <sup>55</sup> "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor. 15).

At about 6am Nigeria time on May 19 2023, I received with mixed feelings a short WhatsApp text message from one of my siblings that Brother Henry Gbamis (Snr), my father, had swallowed up death in victory during the early hour devotion that morning! With tears flowing down my cheeks, I bowed to my knees and thanked God for the long life that God spared him to spend on earth in the service of his Lord. Just while I was planning to fly back to the country from the continent of North America, I was amazed at the show of love that all the community around showed, particularly the brethren in Ilorin. Brethren had converged from Friday, 19th May to

Sunday, 21st May, 2023, at Brother Gbamis' compound to sing and pray all through-It was awesome!

On arriving in the country, at the shortest behest notice, the burial arrangement was communicated to brethren around the country, and out of deep respect to Brother Henry Gbamis Snr., many brethren and friends postponed their already scheduled activities and appointment and headed down to Ilorin for the official service of songs on June 2 and Burial program on June 3, 2023, respectively.

### **Special Appreciation:**

Church of Christ, Alekuwodo, Osogbo  
Church of Christ, Amilegbe, Ilorin  
Church of Christ, Amunloko, Osogbo  
Church of Christ, Budo Iya, Ilorin  
Church of Christ, Ebute-Metta, Lagos  
Church of Christ, Epe, Lagos  
Church of Christ, Fate, Ilorin  
Church of Christ, Itori, Ewekoro, Ado odo, Ogun St.  
Church of Christ, Koloko, Ibadan  
Church of Christ, Liasu Road, Ikotun, Lagos  
Church of Christ, Odo Ona Kekere, Ibadan  
Church of Christ, Offa, Kwara St.  
Church of Christ, Ogo Oluwa, Osogbo  
Church of Christ, Oke Oniti, Osogbo  
Church of Christ, Omuaran, Kwara St.  
Church of Christ, Tanke, Ilorin  
Church of Christ, Township DSC, Warri

Let us continue to walk on the path of righteousness, doing the Lord's will until our journey is ended here on earth. God's blessings!

In His Vineyard,  
**Rowland Femi Gbamis**

# ADDENDUM

## The Funeral of Brother Henry Gbamis (1932-2023)

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

A veteran preacher in Nigeria, Brother Henry Gbamis (Snr.) on Friday, May 19, 2023, departed this world at the age of 91. Brother Henry Gbamis is the father of my dear friend, Rowland Femi Gbamis, a gospel preacher who has been a regular contributor to Unmasking Sophistry Magazine since its inception. When I received the news of the demise of Brother Gbamis on that Friday morning, I was just preparing to step out of my house to deliver a sermon at the funeral service of Sister Amope Olabisi Oshikanlu (1950-2023) that took place in Lagos. After sending my condolences to Brother Rowland, I inquired if he would be flying down to Nigeria from Canada for the funeral and he said he is already trying to book his flight. At that point, I knew that a wonderful reunion is about to take place.

The service of songs was conducted on Friday, the 2nd of June, 2023, and the burial program on Saturday, the 3rd of June, 2023 at the residence of Brother Gbamis in Amoyo, Ilorin, Kwara State. I left Lagos at about 10:30am on Friday morning (June 2) for Ilorin but stopped at Ibadan to join two brethren, Samuel and Elizabeth, who traveled together with me to Ilorin. From Ibadan, we entered a public bus to Ilorin. While on the bus, we met (by serendipity) a sister, Ifeoluwa, who figured we are members of the church of Christ by inadvertently listening to our conversation. She was also going to Ilorin to see her family and we became friends. We got to Amoyo, Ilorin at about 6pm and we joined the service of songs that evening. The venue was filled to the brim with people from different parts of Nigeria. I saw brethren, including preachers from Lagos, Delta, Kwara, Osun, Ibadan, etc. There was a lot of singing that evening. After the event, Brother Rowland ensured we were fed and

afterward provided very good accommodation for us.

The next day was the funeral service. We got dressed and were at the event early enough. The venue was filled with his family, brethren from different parts of the country, neighbours, and friends. I led the opening prayer while Brethren Sunday Ayandare and Gbenga Fabunmi of the church of Christ, Koloko, Ibadan preached at the funeral. In his speech, Brother Ayandare emphasized the fact that death will come to all and that it is important for everyone to be prepared for it and make their hearts right with God. There was a lot of singing by the brethren at the event and it was a marvelous one. Samuel and I left Ilorin after the burial on Saturday. Since her family lives in Ilorin, Elizabeth stayed a few more days there with them and did not go back with us. Samuel and I arrived in Ibadan around 6pm and I proceeded to Lagos. I got home at about 8:30pm.

We thank God for the life of Brother Henry Gbamis and the success of the burial. His son, Rowland, is a very vibrant gospel preacher who teaches the truth with all boldness. We are grateful to have men like him stand for the truth and contribute to this journal. We express our deepest sympathy to the good family Brother Henry Gbamis has left behind and our prayer is that God gives them the fortitude to bear the irreparable loss.



Henry Gbamis (Snr.)

# ADDENDUM

## Photo Speaks



Moment of singing at the funeral of Late Henry Gbamis



From Left: O.L. Egharevba, S. Ayandare & S.C. Omaka at the funeral of Late Henry Gbamis



Moment of singing at the funeral of Late Henry Gbamis



From Left: S.C. Omaka, S. Ayandare & O.L. Egharevba, at the funeral of Late Henry Gbamis



From Left: J.E. Jaiyeola, L. Jaiyeola, S.C. Omaka & O.L. Egharevba at the service of songs of Late Henry Gbamis



Some gospel preachers at the service of songs



## Photo Speaks



From left: O.L. Egharevba, J.E. Jaiyeola & S.C. Omaka after the service of songs of Late Henry Gbamis



Rowland Femi Gbamis, speaking at the service of songs of Late Henry Gbamis



At the graveside of Late Henry Gbamis



The coffin of the Late Henry Gbamis



From Left: Sister Ojeva (Nee Gbamis), R.F Gbamis, G. Fabunmi at the graveside of Late Henry Gbamis