



# 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

This is the tenth edition of *Unmasking Sophistry Magazine*. It is the second issue in the year 2023. We are grateful to God for the success of this edition. As usual, this journal is designed to teach the truth of God's word as well as expose the various arguments that have been prepared in defense of false religion and arguments designed to oppose the Christian faith. To cover a wide range of areas, various sections have been created in this journal and topics relating to each of the sections will be discussed in every edition in a consistent manner.

In the last edition of this journal, we examined various subjects under each of the sections such as: *Is Faith Blind?*; *The Problem With Organized Religion*; *A Discussion On the Head Covering Of I Corinthians 11*; *Quibbles at Backfired*; *The Beginning Of Apostasy*; *The History Of the Institutional Controversy*; *Contend Earnestly For the Faith*; *Mothers: The Heart Of the Family*; *How a Wife Builds a Godly Home*; *How a Husband Builds a Godly Home*; *How To Judge A Sermon*; *Faith Without Works Is Dead*; *Making Effective Use Of the Internet and Social Media*; as well as other interesting topics. We appreciate all the kind feedback received from our dear readers.

Meanwhile, this edition shall focus on topics such as; *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.

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 thank you all for your love and encouragement. 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

## The Deity of Christ: Refuting Some False Arguments

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

The very idea that Jesus was the first to be created is not only absurd, but it is inconsistent with the teaching of the Bible.

Recently I met some preachers in the Lord's church who affirm that Jesus Christ was created. By "created" they mean that Jesus Christ at a point before the creation of the world, was not in existence. Then God the Father had to create Him, after which He (the Father), together with Jesus created all other things in the world.

Interestingly, these same preachers admit that Jesus is God. Quite strangely, they made Jesus a "created God" who is qualified to receive worship. Some arguments were advanced in support of their affirmation. It is my desire to address these arguments and see what the Bible says about them. It seems to me that the concept of Jesus being a "created God" would be like the concept of a "married bachelor" – both statements are not only contradictions in thought but they simply do not exist. Let us look at some of the arguments used by them to defend this doctrine.

### Jesus Was Begotten

One of the arguments used by these folks is about the usage of the word "begotten" found in Hebrews 1:5. The text reads: "*For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You'? And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son'?*" They argue that the Greek word translated "begotten" as used in this verse means "to bring forth" or "to create" and that since Jesus Christ was begotten by the Father, then it means He was created. By this very argument, they have successfully made the angels uncreated beings. Notice that Hebrews 1:5 clearly states that none of the angels were ever said to be begotten. And if "begotten" means "created" as these

brethren affirm, then the simple meaning of the text would be that none of the angels were ever created. But we know that angels were created as evident in Psalm 148:5. In an attempt to prove that Jesus was created by running to this passage, these folks have inadvertently made the angels uncreated!

But then, we also find the word "begotten" used in I Corinthians 4:15 when Paul told the Corinthians that "*though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus **I have begotten you through the gospel.***" Would anyone argue that the Corinthians were created by Paul? Was it that they were not existing, and Paul had to bring them into existence? Paul is simply indicating that the Corinthians are now in a new position. He was the instrument of their conversion to Christ by means of the gospel; by preaching it to them, that is, by the truth. Whatever the word begotten means, it sure does not mean that the Corinthians were not in existence and then Paul brought them into existence. Surely, the word would not also mean in Hebrews 1:5 that there was a time Jesus was not in existence and God had to bring him into existence.

### Jesus Had A Father Before He Came to Earth

Another argument from Hebrews 1:5 often used by these preachers is that Jesus had a Father from when He was in heaven. And just like the earthly fathers always exist before their children, God the Father existed before the Son. But whether Jesus was a Son in heaven or not is not an indication that He was created. The truth is: it is erroneous to suggest (or state) that the word "Son" as used for Jesus necessitates any kind



of physical begetting since we are “sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26). In the United States, George Washington is often called “the father of his country” without any understanding or suggestion that those in the U.S. are his biological sons. So far as I know, he never had any “sons” in that sense. Quite often I have read of a person who is called “the father of medicine,” or “the father of sociology” or “the father of” something else, without the idea of that individual having begotten a “son” in the sense that “son” is so often used in the Bible. Jesus was not the “Son” because He had a beginning (e.g., that He was a CREATED being). He was the agent of creation, as the apostle John wrote in John 1, not a part of what was created!

### **Jesus Was Made**

There is another argument that these brethren advance from Hebrews 1:4. The text says in the King James Version: “*being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*” These brethren say that the word “made” means “to create” or “to assemble.” And because the Bible says Jesus was “made so much better than the angels,” then it means He was created better than the angels. But we find this same word used in Matthew 23:15 when Jesus said “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and **when he is made**, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves*” (KJV). Was Jesus implying that the Scribes and Pharisees created the proselyte? Was the proselyte not in existence before he was made by the scribes and Pharisees? In this verse, Jesus was simply speaking of the conversion of the proselyte. There is a change in his position and in that sense, he was “made.” In the same way, Hebrews 1:4 is not even talking about creation rather, it speaks of Christ's role in the scheme of

redemption and what He had become. If a man was made (or became) the director of a company, that would not mean he was created by the company or that he never existed before he was made such. It is very inappropriate to just stick to one meaning of a word and insist that such meaning would be applied in every instance the word occurs without regard for the context.

### **Jesus Is the Firstborn of every creature**

Speaking of Christ in Colossians 1:15, Paul said “*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*” And these brethren think that the word firstborn is used in this passage to mean that Christ was the first to be created. But the usage of the word “firstborn” simply indicates that Jesus is supreme over all creatures (not that He is a created being). It refers to the firstborn in position and not in time. For instance, when we refer to Jill Biden as the “first lady” of the United States of America, we do not mean she is the first woman in time. We simply refer to her as the first lady in position. Another good example is found in Jeremiah 31:9 when God called Ephraim His firstborn. However, notice from Genesis 48:14 that Ephraim was the younger son while Manasseh was the firstborn: “*And Israel stretched out his right hand ...upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head,...for Manasseh was the firstborn.*” Colossians 3:16 clearly tells us the very point of verse 15 – everything was created by Jesus and for Jesus – He is supreme! If Jesus is a created being, then it means that He created Himself based on verse 16.

### **Jesus is the Beginning of the Creation of God**

The last argument we would consider is found in Revelation 3:14 where Jesus said He is “*the Beginning of the creation of God*” These brethren interpret this



passage to mean that Jesus is the first to be created. However, the term “beginning,” as employed in Revelation 3:14, does not suggest a commencement in time for Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, these brethren claim that “the beginning of the creation” was a time prior to Genesis 1 (before God created the world) and that it was sometime within this period that Jesus was created. But the Bible teaches that the beginning of the creation began with Genesis when God created the heavens and the earth. Notice in Mark 10:6 (*“But from **the beginning of the creation**, God ‘made them male and female’”*) and Mark 13:19 (*“For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since **the beginning of the creation** which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.”*) that Jesus referred to the beginning of the creation and this points back to Genesis when God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were all present in creating all things. Hence, “the beginning of the creation” does not refer to a time before Genesis as these people contend that Jesus was created. Since Jesus was present at “the beginning of the Creation,” it is an assumption to find another beginning of the creation in which it is claimed that Jesus was created.

So, this phrase as used in Revelation 3:14 simply indicates that Jesus is “first in rank,” not first to be created. The Greek word that is rendered “beginning” in Revelation 3:14 is ARCHE. The term is employed in various senses in the Bible. It may refer to the “beginning” of something (e.g., in “the beginning of the gospel” (Mark 1:1) and it can also signify the “first cause,” of a thing, or that by which something “begins to be,” i.e., the originating source. In Revelation 3:14 ARCHE is used of Christ as the uncreated principle, the active cause of creation. The term in this text is not to be understood as the first of created things. Notice that in Revelation 22:13, Christ refers to Himself as

the “beginning [arche] and the end [telos].” If “beginning” suggests that there was a time when Christ did not exist, but that He came into existence as the first being of God’s creation, does “end” indicate that there will be a point at which the Savior will go out of existence? The question hardly needs a response. Also, in Isaiah 48:12 the Lord God described Himself as “the first” and “the last.” Did He mean to indicate that there was a time when He did not exist? The very idea that Jesus was the first to be created is not only absurd, but it is inconsistent with the teaching of the Bible.

### **The Bible Teaches That Jesus Is From Everlasting**

The Bible teaches that Jesus is God and that suggests He was not created. He accepted worship on different occasions (Matthew 8:2,9:18,14:33,15:25,28:9,17; Hebrews 1:6). Cornelius refused to accept worship since it was improper to worship a creature like him (Acts 10:25-26). Romans 1:25 makes it clear it is wrong to worship the creature: *“who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”* Creature worship is sinful and if Jesus was created as these brethren affirm, it would be a sin for Him to have been worshipped.

Micah 5:2, in speaking of Jesus teaches that His “goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” This means He has been from eternity. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16, Hebrews 1:2, Genesis 1:26).

**I encourage you to watch these two videos addressing these arguments:**

**Could Jesus be God if He was created?**

<https://youtu.be/RUp1MNOru7Q>

**Is Jesus God or was He created?**

[https://youtu.be/3DwYh\\_YR56o](https://youtu.be/3DwYh_YR56o)

# WORLD RELIGIONS

## The Ten Commandments: Scripture Vs. Catholicism

By Ron Halbrook | Kentucky, US

In the Bible the 10 Commandments are recorded in Exodus 20:1-17 as follows:

- I. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
- II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.
- III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
- IV. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- V. Honor thy father and thy mother.
- VI. Thou shalt not kill.
- VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- VIII. Thou shalt not steal.
- IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
- X. Thou shalt not covet.

All 10 Commandments are recorded in the Catholic Bible, but following are the 10 Commandments as listed in *The Catholic Concise Encyclopedia*, compiled and edited by Robert C. Broderick, M.A. (St. Paul, MN: Catechetical Guild Educational Society) (Nihil obstat: John A. Goodwine, J.C.D., Censor Librorum) (Imprimatur: Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York), on page 100:

- I. I am the Lord, your God, you shall not have false gods before Me.
- II. You shall not take the Lord's name in vain.
- III. You shall keep holy the Sabbath day.
- IV. Honor your parents.
- V. Do not murder.
- VI. Do not commit adultery.
- VII. Do not steal.
- VIII. Do not lie.
- IX. Do not have adulterous desires.
- X. Do not covet your neighbor's goods.

Notice that the Catholic list entirely omits the second commandment forbidding images. In order to get 10,

they must break the last one into two parts. That is also how they are listed on plaques posted in Catholic Churches and in Catholic textbooks and study materials.

Here is the full text of the 10th commandment in the Bible:

“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.”

When this commandment forbade coveting, it gave examples of things a man might covet. This does not constitute two separate commandments.

We live under “the law of Christ” and not the law of Moses today (Gal. 6:2; 3:24-28). The old covenant including the Sabbath law has vanished away, having been nailed to the cross (Heb. 8:13; Col. 2:14-17). The other nine commandments including the prohibition against idols and images are included in the new covenant by the authority of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 13:8-10; 1 Jn. 5:21).

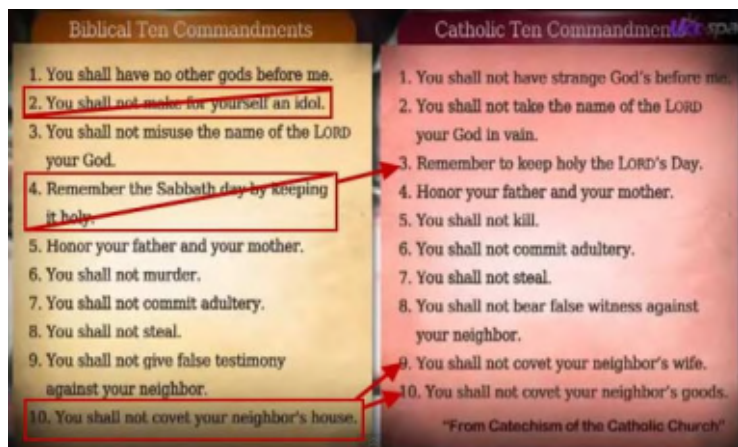
God preserved Old Testament history including the 10 Commandments to show how He created and preserved the nation of Israel from which our Savior would be born. That nation and its covenant have fulfilled their purpose and passed away, but when we reference this history we should do so accurately. The Catholic Church does not wish to post passages from Scripture condemning idols because it teaches people to bow, genuflect, and pray to all sorts of images, especially images of Mary. Catholic chapels, churches, cathedrals, and basilicas are filled with these images and many Catholics put them in their homes, yards, and vehicles. Both the Old and the New





Testaments strictly forbid such idols.

**Revelation 22:18-19** warns we must not add anything to God's Word nor take away anything from God's Word.



### ALEXANDER CAMPBELL AND THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Members of the Lord's church are sometimes erroneously referred to as "Campbellites." What exactly is behind such appellation? It is a tiresome thing to have to respond, again and again, to the same misguided (and frequently dishonest) charges. But one is compelled, from time to time, to do so.

First, Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) never started a church (or claimed such), even though reference works frequently refer to him as "founder" of the "Christian Churches" and "Churches of Christ." It is a tragedy that the man who labored the bulk of his adult life with a view to encouraging others to abandon sectarianism should himself be accused of being the head and founder of the "Campbellite" church.

The reformer utterly repudiated the designation. In 1826 Campbell wrote:

"Some religious editors in Kentucky call those who are desirous of seeing the ancient order of things restored, "the Restorationers," "the Campbellites". . . This may go well with some; but all who fear God and keep His commands will pity and deplore the

weakness and folly of those who either think to convince or to persuade by such means" (The Christian Baptist, Vol. IV, pp. 88-89).

In 1828 Mr. Campbell responded to the question: "What is Campbellism?" in the following fashion:

"It is a nickname of reproach invented and adopted by those whose views, feelings and desires are all sectarian - who cannot conceive of Christianity in any other light than an ISM" (Christian Baptist, Vol. V, p. 270).

It is a matter of historical record that there were churches of Christ - both in Europe and in America - before Alexander Campbell had a clear concept of what primitive Christianity was all about. Leslie G. Thomas has documented New Testament churches in Scotland, England, and Ireland, dating between 1778 and 1810 (The Restoration Handbook, p. 73). Historical accounts reveal that the Old Philadelphia congregation of the Lord's people, which was near Morrison, Tennessee, was organized in the year 1810. Alexander Campbell was not baptized until 1812, and he continued to be affiliated with the Baptists until the 1820s.

Churches of Christ do not owe their origin to Campbell or any other human leader. The fact that some, therefore, delight in using the term "Campbellite" to refer to those who choose to be called simply "Christians," rather than wearing humanly-devised titles, is more of a commentary upon their characters than anything else. Why is it that so many religionists have such a difficult time being comfortable with the name "Christian," and that alone (cf. Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16)? The use of human titles is sinful (cf. I Cor. 1:10ff).

- Wayne Jackson

## 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 Hats, Hair and Harridans

By William J. Stewart | Ontario, Canada

When brethren come together, we see a variety of greetings. Many offer a good strong handshake; some might exchange a delightful and cheery “Hello;” others may even share a warm hug. But where is the “holy kiss”? The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” In fact, we find the same thing in 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; and 1 Thessalonians 5:26. Why have we exchanged holy kisses for holy hugs, handshakes and hellos?

On the same night Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with His apostles He also washed their feet. After He finished, He said,

Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you (John 13:12-15).

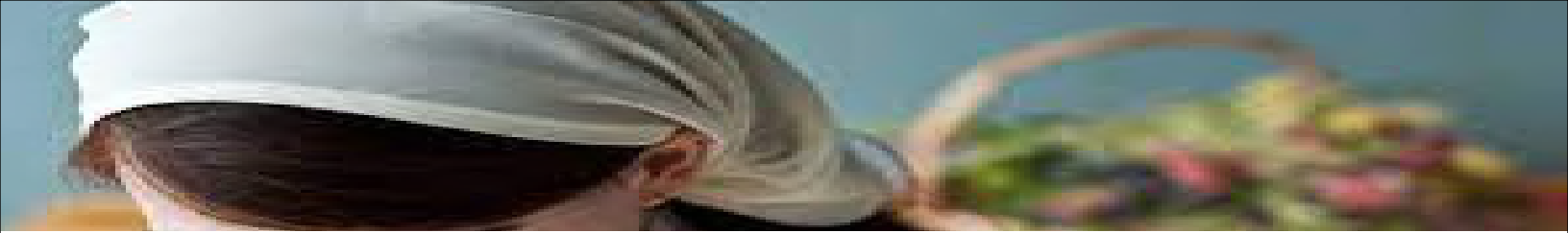
When was the last time you washed a brother's feet or vice versa? Why are we not washing one another's feet? Jesus commanded it!

I trust our brethren in Amarillo, Lagos, Florence, and elsewhere demonstrate love for one another both in their greetings and through acts of service. That said, I doubt they are doing so with holy kisses and

footwashings. The universal applicability of the Corinthian letter which our esteemed brother mentioned in his article (which is true of the New Testament as a whole) does not enjoin adherents to maintain societal practices or arrangements. We understand the principle behind the “holy kiss” – the warmth and comradery of brotherhood. We grasp the reason behind the foot washing – service to one another. However, in neither case is it necessary to enforce for ritual sake practices which are rooted in Jewish culture and an age of dirt roads and open sandals.

I share my esteemed brother's concern about men wearing ball caps (with or without logos) or ten-gallon Stetson hats while serving in the assembly, though not for the same reason. He condemns such as a violation of God's law, transgressions of 1 Corinthians 11. Conversely, I believe it to be in poor taste, flying in the face of acceptable cultural expectations for such an assembly. The same is true for the eligible elder candidate with long hair and the bare-headed or short-haired ladies mentioned. These are all cultural or personal sensitivities, not Divinely legislated clothing and grooming practices.

The text certainly has “a strong emphasis on maintaining the proper role” of men and women. In fact, this is the principle established in the text. The



covering or uncovering of the head is an application of the principle (like the foot washing and holy kiss mentioned above). Several other texts speak about the role of men and women (1 Corinthians 14, Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 2, Titus 2, and 1 Peter 3) but none of them mention the need for women to cover their heads to properly reflect their relationship to men or to the Lord. That is not conclusive evidence of this being a custom rather than a command, but it is curious that 1 Corinthians 11 is the only time the covering is mentioned despite the roles of men and women being discussed multiple times.

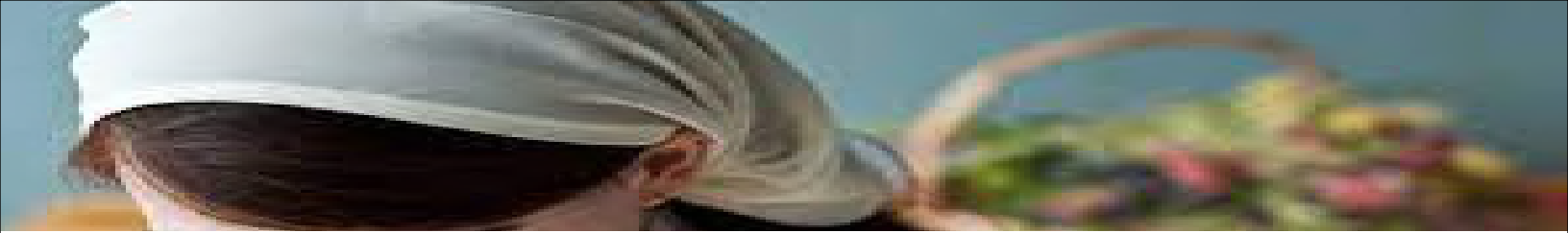
Our brother would have us believe the instruction of 1 Corinthians 11 requires women to wear a covering in our worship assemblies. Please note verses 5, “...every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head...” Paul is not talking about women listening to men pray or prophesy – the woman in question is praying or prophesying. However, in 1 Corinthians 14:34, the same apostle wrote to the same Corinthian church, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says.” Women are not permitted to pray or prophesy in the assembly. This text is not about women covering their heads in an assembly of the church.

We’re told for eighteen centuries basically no one “...who claimed to be Christians disputed this matter.” That is an exceptionally broad statement. Does our brother have access to written records from every quarter of the world in every century between then and now to support his claim? Even if all Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants imposed the head covering on women in worship assemblies for eighteen centuries, they have failed in their application of the text. Again, it is not about the assembly.

Our brother aptly pointed out the inconsistency of those who excuse women from wearing the covering, reasoning it is a custom, but still bind short hair and no covering on men. He’s right, it is inconsistent. I am one of the few my esteemed opponent says will “...at least excuse men along with women from adhering to this...” I do not expect my brethren to wash feet, but I do expect them to serve one another. I do not expect my brethren to wear coverings or have a certain length of hair, but I do expect them to adhere to distinct roles which God has given to men and women.

What custom did the apostles and the churches of God not have (verse 16)? Our brother says it is “...the abhorrent Corinthian practice of having women appear uncovered...” and that Paul was “...explaining that no other church anywhere in the world allowed their women to behave in such a fashion.” He affirms the instruction for women to be covered was spoken universally by the apostles and given to all the churches of God, and cites Mike Willis (Commentary on 1 Corinthians, p. 308) as a hostile witness to that end. But where is the biblical evidence showing such a command was given universally and proclaimed by all the apostles? There is no instruction about the covering in the New Testament except what Paul wrote to Corinth.

If the “no such custom” of verse 16 is women not having their heads covered, it essentially makes Paul’s statement a double negative – “we do not not do this.” Neither Paul nor the Spirit are so convoluted in the presentation of truth. And yet an impressive list of commentators are cited in support of this muddled explanation. Many commentators agreeing on a position does not make it biblically correct. Nineteenth century commentator B.W. Johnson observed of verse 16, the “...no such custom... refers to covering the head, etc. The lesson of this whole



passage is that we must not defy existing social usages in such a way as to bring reproach on the church” (People’s New Testament Commentary). Our brother warned us about the “first-wave feminism” of Johnson and others like him, for not only did he identify the head covering as a custom, but he also advocated for deaconesses in the local church. That said, if our brother can unapologetically support his claims with denominational preachers who were either unable or unwilling to teach truth about salvation, then I will also freely quote a man who admittedly went beyond the scope of Scripture about deaconesses, but who obviously had a better handle on truth than his denominational counterparts. The pursuit of the perfect commentator will always leave us disappointed.

Sadly, our brother had little to say about the text itself or the greater context in which it is found. Instead he hung his hat on a perceived feminist agenda as the reason for brethren permitting women to worship God with uncovered heads. A plain reading of the text reveals the principle of headship (verse 3) with a contextual application (verses 4-5) which has unfortunately been misconstrued as Divine legislation about coverings within the assembly. Did Paul command in verse 5 (women praying and prophesying in the assembly with covered heads) what he would later forbid in 1 Corinthians 14:34? There are several statements in the text (“if” clauses, “judge among yourselves,” and the appeal to nature) which indicate this is not a Divine command but a matter of reason and judgment.

The custom of the covering is not the discovery of a new meaning of 1 Corinthians 11:16, it is the result of sound and careful Bible study. It does not undo fourteen verses of teaching – it accounts for the content of the text and the greater context which

focuses on the compromise between Christian liberties and the need to not cause offenses (6:12; 8:1, 9; 9:19-22; 10:23-24; 10:32-11:1). The principle of headship is still binding, just as principles of brotherhood and Christian service are binding today, but the cultural applications of these principles (the washing of feet, holy kisses, hair length and head coverings) were never introduced as the Divinely decreed method (and only way) to fulfill these principles. The Scriptures do not bind head coverings on women.

### **GOD'S PROMISES DO NOT FAIL**

Shortly before his death, Joshua reminded the people of Israel about how God had kept His promise to them. He said, “Now behold, today I am going the way of all the earth, and you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one word of all the good words which the Lord your God spoke concerning you has failed; all have been fulfilled for you, not one of them has failed” (Joshua 23:14).

This was a reminder of what was stated earlier: “So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand. Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass” (Joshua 21:43-45).

Despite the challenges they faced and the hardships they endured, God blessed them as He had promised. This is important for us to remember. As we face challenges and hardships today, we can continue to trust in Him.

So remember that God’s promises do not fail. He will do what He said He would do, and examples like the Israelites’ conquest of the land of Canaan are a reminder of that. Since God is faithful, let us continue in faithful service to Him.

–Andy Sochor

## Discussion Of First Corinthians 11:2-16

### Response to A Custom, Not A Command

By Brent Sharp | Arkansas, USA

To begin with, let's fix the opening line: The apostle Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 11 concerning head coverings has been variably interpreted by our brethren since the turn of the 20th century. Prior to the turn of the 20th century brethren were united on Paul's admonitions for women to have long hair and coverings in worship, and men to have short hair and bare heads in worship. In fact, nowhere in what we might broadly call "Christendom" was there any variable interpretation as to whether women should have their heads covered in the assembly for almost two thousand years.

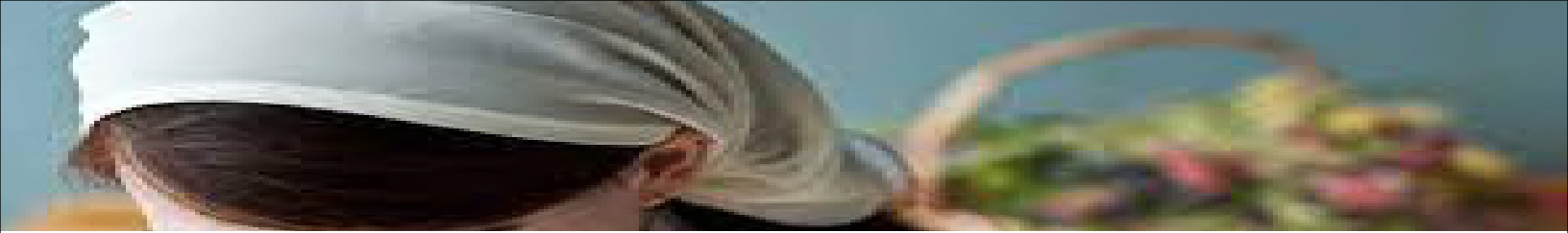
Brethren who oppose Paul's teaching on women's headdress in I Corinthians 11 make much hay of the word "custom" appearing in verse 16. As we previously saw, the custom Paul is referring to is allowing women with short hair and no covering (and men with long hair and a covering), and that Paul's plain, divinely inspired statement was that no church, anywhere in the entire universe, allowed that to go on in the assembly. The Corinthian custom of feminine rebellion through bear headedness is what the Holy Spirit is referring to by use of the word "custom".

As for the context: Paul presents multiple arguments for the commands he relays from God in verses 2-16. First, he states that the command on a hierarchy of the Father to Christ to man to woman (verse 3). This is a universal truth, it is in no way consistent with the context to make this a local custom. In verse 7 Paul tells us another reason for these rules; the man is the image and glory of God; the woman is the image and glory of man. This is a universal truth, it is in no way consistent with the context to make this a local

custom. In verse 10 Paul stresses that a woman should have a symbol of being in submission on her head "because of the angels." I am uncertain as to the exact meaning of this verse; nevertheless there is no indication that it is in any way limited to Corinth; this too is a universal principle. In verse 14 Paul states that "nature" teaches us the difference between male and female hair length. This is a universal truth, it is in no way consistent with the context to make this a local custom.

As to women wearing the head covering as etiquette, we have now reduced Paul to Ms. Manners. This is, frankly, absurd. This is also a purely modern invention. The covering was, and is, a divinely commanded article of clothing demonstrating feminine submission (see Adam Clarke; Albert Barnes; Jameson, Faucet and Brown; Dummelow; Matthew Henry; Johann Peter Lange; Matthew Poole; Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges; Lipscomb, etc.). Paul did not tell the Corinthians to make sure they used proper etiquette because the woman was created for the man. Such a line of argumentation reduces the entire passage to nonsense.

Next we apparently have to deal with the idea of "apostolic recommendations." Paul's appeal to the Corinthians to be able to understand his command by using their own judgement does not reduce four direct commands to take 'em or leave 'em "recommendations." The idea that Paul makes arguments based on the order of creation, on the inherent nature of the sexes, that he says to disobey the commands he is giving is "shameful" and that a



woman who disobeys should have her head shaved.... The statement that this is just a “recommendation” displays a disturbingly flippant attitude towards divine authority. Paul is an apostle of Christ, he gives four direct commands, he explains multiple reasons for those commands, he is speaking by direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and we are supposed to believe it's just a “recommendation” and we don't have to do it if we don't want to. That is not exegesis, it is high-handed rebellion.

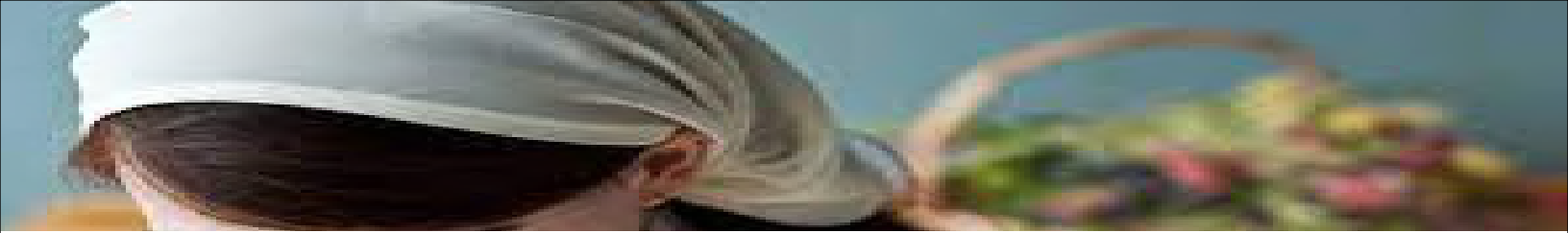
Please note as well, when Paul gives instructions which are not binding insofar as sin is concerned (marriage in I Corinthians 7) he specifically states that is what he is doing, and further clarifies the matter by saying he is speaking on his own account and not according to divine inspiration in that matter. In the passage we are studying, however, Paul is speaking by direct inspiration and is giving specific commands as ordered by the Holy Spirit.

The word “nature” in this passage is the same word, used in the same way, as his condemnation of homosexuality in Romans 1 (see Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words, in addition to the various scholars listed above). When Paul said the homosexuals were doing that which was against “nature” in Romans 1 he meant that their actions were a violation of God's created order. The same is true of short haired women and long haired men in I Corinthians 11. As to the Nazirite, the long hair of a Nazirite man was a symbol of humility before God, and was an exception to how other men were wearing their hair (See Albert Barnes, Numbers and I Corinthians commentaries; Adam Clarke commentary I Cor. 11:10). This does raise the question as well, would it be acceptable for a man to have hair to his waist, wear a ten gallon cowboy hat, and wait on the Lord's Table? Remember, don't bind

your customs and recommendations on others! Or are we just concerned about the “etiquette” involved?

Next Brother Stewart argues that since different people have used head coverings for different reasons in different times and places we may dispense with it if we see fit. Perhaps we could apply this to the Lord's Supper as well? After all, people have eaten unleavened bread for many different reasons in different times and places, and the Lord's Supper is in this immediate context as well, so maybe that's just a matter of etiquette, and as long as we “remember the principle” we can dispense with actual unleavened bread if we see fit? And certainly men have drunk the fruit of the vine for many different reasons in many different locations in many different times, so as long as we “observe the principle” certainly we can dispense with the necessity of actually using the fruit of the vine? After all, that admonition is right here in the same context where some would have us believe Paul is just making recommendations. Now we are certain Brother Stewart doesn't actually believe such, but unfortunately he's left himself without a leg to stand on against such nonsense by his argumentation on the immediately preceding passage.

Brother Stewart's entire argument depends on the fallacious assertion that the word “custom” in verse 16 refers to women wearing a head covering; as we have seen that is the opposite of the truth. When Paul said “we have no such custom” he was referring to the fact that the universal practice of every church in the world at that time, other than Corinth, was that women were to be covered, and no church other than Corinth practiced the degraded custom of allowing their women to be uncovered (Mike Willis, commentary I Corinthians). God, through Paul, commands the covering and gives multiple reason for its necessity; unfortunately most of the church has departed from



this command and now makes the command of God of no effect by their custom.

It would also be well to note that this is a very new doctrine. Prior to the 20th century the universal practice of all who claimed Christianity was to have women covered in worship, and all referred to Paul's teaching in I Corinthians as the authority for this doctrine (Chrysostom, Calvin, etc.) Perhaps we should note that one of the main arguments brethren have held against instrumental music over the years is that it is an innovation which did not appear in worship services until the 7th century. Now I hold that this is, in fact, a legitimate and sound argument against instrumental music; I fail to see, however, how it can be made in good faith by men who defend an innovation in worship that "did not appear until the late 19th century, and was not widely accepted until the middle of the 20th century. I do not ask that brethren abandon the aforementioned argument against instrumental music; rather I find I must insist that we apply the same standard to our own practices concerning God's commands in I Corinthians 11.

"Men with long hair and women with short hair is a matter of decorum, not sin" is the modernistic teaching of men; "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering" is the direct command of God given through his apostle. I know which I choose.

## GOD DOES NOT SAVE US BECAUSE OF OUR GREATNESS

The children of Israel were God's chosen people. As Moses told them, "For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6). God led them out of Egyptian bondage and would bring them to the promised land.

However, it was important for them to remember why God was doing this. Moses continued, "The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers..." (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).

It would be tempting to become arrogant, thinking that if God chose them, it must be because they were "better" than the nations around them. Yet God did not choose them because of their greatness but because of His love and the promise He made before they were even born.

The same is true for us today. We often try to make ourselves appear important through our actions or accomplishments. However, even when these are good, they are not why God has extended salvation to us.

So remember that God does not save us because of our greatness. God loved us and sent His Son to die for us, even though we did not deserve this, and He promised to save those who were faithful long before we were born. Let us show humble gratitude to Him for this.

—Andy Sochor

# 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 his debate with Mr. F. S. Gipson, in Mangram, Arkansas, in 1934, and in other debates with other Baptist preachers on other occasions, this quibble was made to W. Curtis Porter: If a man gets killed on his way to be baptized, will he go to heaven or hell? What is to be the condition of that man? Porter's reply was, "I suppose he is in the same condition as that man who is penitent at the mourner's bench and trying to pray through to salvation. Before he gets through, he smothers to death.

Mr. W. A. Ida, in Washburn, Missouri, in referring to John 3:5 in which the Lord stated that a man must be born of the water and the Spirit or he could not enter into the kingdom of God, declared that the Lord referred to the natural birth. That this was the thing involved and that we had no passage here to indicate anything about the importance of baptism. That the Lord simply meant the natural birth. In response, Porter told him that according to the science of obstetrics, there was a such thing known as a dry birth, and in that case, he wonders where the child would go, not having been born of water.

W. Curtis Porter met with W. H. Little, at Troup, Texas in a debate. During the debate, W.H. Little constantly referred to W. Curtis Porter as "Brother" Porter. And Porter called him "Elder" Little, or "Mr." Little. Little made some objection to it. He thought if he called Porter "brother," Porter ought to call him "brother," not simply "Mr." or "Elder." Porter told him that he did not intend any discourtesy about the matter, but that he remembers the Lord said one time about some matters, "That whosoever does the will of my Father, the same is my mother, brother, and sister." Porter said further: "I don't consider that you have done it. And therefore, I do not address you as brother, but I want to be fair about it. I tell you what I will do. I will call you cousin if you want me to. We have two characters of the New Testament, Jesus and John the Baptist, who were cousins. I am following Jesus, you are following John. So I will call you cousin."

Hoyt Chastain said, in a debate at Malvern, Arkansas in 1953, on the question of the possibility of apostasy, that in order to prove that any child of God could ever go to hell, W. Curtis Porter must find an example of it. He insists that Porter must turn to the Bible and find where some man became a child of God, that he died in some kind of sin, and then went to hell. And that Porter must find an example to prove it; he couldn't prove it otherwise. If God said that if people do such things, they go to hell, that was not enough for him. It would have to be proven by an EXAMPLE. And upon that basis, Porter said to Mr. Chastain, "Will you please prove to me an unbeliever will go to hell? WHERE IS YOUR EXAMPLE? Can you take the book of God and find some man who was an unbeliever who died in unbelief, and find where that man went to hell?" And so the matter of example returned upon Chastain with the same force with which he tried to place it upon Porter.



# Church History

## The Council of Nicea

By Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

Since the end of the first century, the apostasy that the apostles warned about continued to slowly build as churches drifted further away from the doctrine of Christ found in the New Testament.

In this article, we will primarily discuss the first ecumenical council that occurred in Nicea in 325 AD. It was a gathering of church leaders from across the Roman Empire who came together to discuss certain controversial issues and come to a consensus on the church's "official" position on these matters.

Before discussing this, it is important to distinguish this from the meeting in Jerusalem found in Acts 15. Luke recorded that some men came from Judea to Antioch and taught that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. Paul and Barnabas had "*great dissension and debate with them*" (Acts 15:2). It was determined to send Paul, Barnabas, and some other brethren to Jerusalem to discuss this question. Many who affirm the legitimacy or authority of the Council of Nicea (and later ones) believe that this meeting in Jerusalem was essentially the same type of gathering. Yet it was not.

The Council of Nicea was a gathering of church leaders throughout the Empire who were called together by Constantine. The meeting in Jerusalem came about when a group of disciples from Antioch traveled to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders of the church in that city (Acts 15:2-4). The brethren from Antioch went to Jerusalem because (1) the apostles were there and (2) the ones who were disturbing the church in Antioch with their teaching had come from their "*number*" (Acts 15:24). A problem had arisen in Antioch, so those who were connected to it in some way met to resolve the issue.

### Peace Leads to Controversy


In a previous article in this series, we discussed the persecution that had targeted the church through the beginning of the fourth century. This persecution "officially" ended in 313 AD when Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration. With this and his alleged conversion, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

It is certainly good for brethren to enjoy peace. Paul said that Christians are to pray for civil authorities "*so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Timothy 2:2-4). However, while such peace can help the gospel spread, it can also provide false teachers with more opportunities to spread their errors.

In the most recent article in this series, we discussed the beginning of apostasy. We saw that the seeds were already planted at the end of the first century and started bearing fruit in the second century. Therefore, it should not be surprising to see significant departures from the doctrines and practices found in the New Testament by the fourth century (the time of Constantine and the Council of Nicea).

### Controversies That Arose

Three major controversies that arose following the Edict of Toleration centered around the teachings of Arius (256-336 AD), Apollinaris (310-390 AD), and Pelagius (355-420 AD). The first of these was



addressed at the Council of Nicea. The others were dealt with at councils in Constantinople (381 AD) and Carthage (418 AD). Before discussing the Council of Nicea further, let us briefly summarize these controversies.

- Arianism – This controversy concerned the Trinity, particularly the relationship between the Father and the Son. This doctrine – attributed to Arius – held that Jesus was created and, therefore, not equal with the Father.
- Apollinarianism – Apollinaris opposed the doctrine of Arianism and the idea that Jesus was inferior to the Father. Yet his doctrine was seen by many as an overreaction (or overcorrection) to the teachings of Arius. Apollinarianism is the idea that Jesus could not have had a human spirit because this was inherently sinful.
- Pelagianism – This controversy centered around sin and salvation. Pelagius taught that man had free will and could choose to do good or evil. His teachings were contrary to the popular doctrine of original sin taught by Augustine.

It is important to note that these “heretical” positions have been defined by their opponents. Many or all of their actual writings were destroyed. However, if we were alive back then and did not align with the official “orthodox” position decided upon by these councils, we would have been labeled as heretics as well. This is especially likely with the controversy over Pelagianism since we would affirm that man has the ability to choose to do either right or wrong (cf. Joshua 24:15) and that God will hold each person accountable for his own sins and not the sins of anyone else (Ezekiel 18:20).

### **Council of Bishops**

The first ecumenical council was called by Emperor

Constantine in 325 AD. The chief issue to be addressed was the controversy over Arianism. Constantine presided over 318 bishops who met in Nicea in Bithynia – an area in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).

This council met to establish the “official” position of the church. In doing this, they formulated a *creed* – an official statement of faith that was to be accepted by all the churches. Many would argue that such creeds represented the teachings of Scripture. However, in reality, they were human interpretations of Scripture that should not have been held to as authoritative. This becomes more clear as additional and conflicting creeds were created and adopted by others after this point.

As Constantine – the ruler of the Roman Empire – presided over this meeting, it also indicated an official union of church and state [*we will discuss this further in the next lesson*].

### **The Nicene Creed**

During the Council of Nicea, the bishops adopted a formal statement of faith – the Nicene Creed – as the “official” position of the church. This was later revised at the first Council of Constantinople in 381 AD. This revision – the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed – is what many today refer to as the Nicene Creed. The revised creed stated the following:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only-begotten, Begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made; of one essence with the Father; by whom all things were made:

Who for us men and for our salvation came



down from heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and was made man;

And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried;

And the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures;

And ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father;

And He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets;

And we believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins.

We look for the Resurrection of the dead,

And the Life of the age to come. Amen.

For the most part, we probably would not argue with the *content* of the creed. In some portions, we may question the wording; but it is not far from what we read about in the New Testament. So why does it matter? The problem is that it takes a man-made statement of faith and turns it into an authoritative statement equal to – or maybe even preferred over – the Spirit-inspired word of God. This is the problem with *every* creed, no matter how close we believe it is to the New Testament.

### Summary

Since the end of the first century, the apostasy that the apostles warned about continued to slowly build as

churches drifted further away from the doctrine of Christ found in the New Testament. However, at the Council of Nicea, an “orthodox” position was adopted for the church as a whole in the form of the Nicene Creed. Christians would now be pressured to accept this because it was the “official” position of “the church.” Furthermore, with the new union of church and state, it would become increasingly more difficult – and dangerous – to simply follow the teachings of Christ without the opinions, commandments, and traditions of man.

### Why We Must Contend For The Faith With Brethren Just Like We Do With Denominations

Reasons it is more than proper to contend for the truth and debate with brethren just like we do with denominational teachers include:

- Because God is “no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34) and neither should we be (James 2:9). If we show such favoritism, we lose our credibility. We betray the fact that we are not really sticking up for God; instead we are just sticking up for our friends. No, if we are truly defending God's word, then we will defend its truth against “friend or foe.” How can some appreciate the proving of Baptists wrong, but at the same time criticize the proving of our brethren wrong? Wrong is wrong no matter who teaches it.
- Because God's commandment to “contend for the faith” in Jude 3 is specifically talking about with brethren (verse 4), though it would apply to any false teacher.
- Because we should love the souls of brethren just as much as we love the souls of denominational believers, perhaps even more so. And so if we don't warn brethren of their error, that is showing a lack of love (Eph 4:15).

Continued on Pg. 40

# BARBS WITH A POINT

## I Am Determined To No Longer Linger

By Rowland Femi Gbamis | Ontario, Canada

The word *determined* in dictionary.com is defined as "resolute; staunch; decided; settled; resolved." The word *determined* indicates firmly established in one's decision or course of conduct, especially for achieving a specific objective. A person who is determined has a solid drive to attain their goals. In other words, a determined individual is highly motivated and unlikely to give up or change their viewpoint. The New Testament Greek for the word *determined* for this lesson is κ ρ ι ν ω (krino), meaning to *judge*. It connotes the action of judging, resolving, and deciding. A similar word to our operative word is the word *resolve* from Webster's dictionary, meaning to determine, to settle, to form a purpose or resolution, to determine after reflection, as to resolve on a better course of life. Therefore, Webster describes the word *resolution* as an act of, or quality of mind admitting or productive of, resolving or determining, resoluteness, firmness; that which is resolved upon or decided upon; firm determination. Consider the following usage of the word Krino in the NT and OT scriptures (Ac 20:16; 25:25; 1Co 2:2 & Ex 21:22; 1Sa 20:7,9,33). Therefore, this discourse focuses on the importance of determination in our Christian journey through 2023.

First, I am determined to be the man God want me to be. Indeed, a closer look at our environment and the church reveal that the world needs faithful, loyal and dedicated fathers who love God and his word. Good dads with godly character and courage to meet the challenges of fatherhood (Eph. 6:4). Is it any coincidence that many fathers who claim to love God and try to walk in the path of righteousness are not in control of their home? What an irony! The simple

answer lies in the fact that most fathers refused to be the man God wanted them to be because they did not respect the word of God. As fathers, God has placed us in our various families to be our home's nourishers, protectors and upholders (1 Tim. 5:8). While we are to be respected by our wives and children, let us endeavour to also regard the word of God by staying at our duty post (Eph. 6:1-3; 5: 22-24; Prov. 19:26; 30:17). We are to be determined to show more love and commitment to our wives and children (Eph. 5: 25-29).

Similarly, as a progenitor that gives life to our children (Gen.5:3), let us be determined and resolved to take hold of the grave responsibility to bring a soul into this world because God will not hold lightly those who shirk in their duties (cf. 1 Sam. 2:22-25, 27-29; 3:13). Thus, may we be determined as fathers to commit to providing for our family their physical provisions (1 Tim. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4: 11-12). Equally important is our responsibility to give spiritual direction to our families (Eph. 6:4). God expects us to lead in training our children. Noah provided leadership by leading his whole family into the ark (Heb. 11:7); Joshua set the standard when he said, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15); Concerning Abraham, God said, "I have known him that he will teach his children and his household to follow the Lord's way, to do justice and righteousness" (Genesis 18:19). What would God said of us? Can He trust us to walk with him through leading our families in his ways, to provide and protect the souls under our oversight? We can achieve our responsibilities as fathers through God's grace, sacrifice, hard work and dedication. Let us commit to bringing up our children in God's way by imbining them with moral character



and spiritual interests that spring from our influence and fatherly instruction (Prov. 22:6). May I also submit that the Bible teaches that having both a father and a mother in the household is essential. God formed the home to include a father and a mother (Gen. 2:18–24). He assigned each of them distinct duties for the household to run smoothly and for children to receive the care they require as they grow into adults. Both fathers and mothers must recognize, appreciate, and commit to their roles at home. Otherwise, the house will not be as God intended.

Second, I am determined to control my tongue. The Psalmist says, "I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress" (17:3). God's children need to control what they say. We must be resolved to keep quiet whenever we have the urge to say things that do not glorify God. We must be determined, like David, to pray "that the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable before God, our Lord, strength, and redeemer" (19:14). We must resolve that we will watch what we say. The Psalmist says, "*Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.*" (141:3). Because it is easy to sin with our mouth, we must be determined to "put away perversity from our mouths and keep corrupt talk far from our lips" (Prov. 4:24). Sometimes, we speak in haste, saying the wrong thing without thinking. The Bible says, "Do not be quick with your mouth; do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God." God is in heaven, and you are on earth, so let your words be few. As a dream comes when there are many cares, so does the speech of a fool when there are many words. "Do not let your mouth lead you into sin" (Eccl. 5:2-3, 6). We must realize that what comes from our mouths reflects what is in our hearts (Mk. 7:20–23). To the Ephesians, Paul would say, "*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but*

*only what helps build others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen*" (Eph. 4:29). What about us? It, thus, behooves us to exercise care not to be guilty of filthy talk, gossip, backbiting, grumbling, slander, and tale-bearing. If we took this precept to heart, the Lord's church and society would be better for it. Significantly, let us resolve with passionate determination not to praise God with our mouths and forget Him in our daily Christian lives. May we not be like those of whom Christ says, "These people draw near to Me with their mouths and honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." Also, in vain, they worship Christ, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:8–9). Let us watch what we say or alter from our mouths. What a better person we will be in the Lord's service, and what a more significant influence we will have among our fellow men!

Third, I am determined not to defile myself. As God's children, the Bible says we are special and unique people (1 Pet. 2:9); what brought about our uniqueness is because of our redemption from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Act 26:18). Unfortunately, like a dog returning to his vomit, we sometimes return to our former ways of lives and thereby fall into the peril of not progressing spiritually (Heb. 5:12-14; cf. 6: 26-39). Critically important is the Lord's admonition: "Let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God (2 Cor. 7:1-2). The example of Daniel in Babylon is worth emulating. The Bible says, "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself" (Dan. 1:8). What a determination! What a resoluteness! To this end, brethren, let us be determined to get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the engrafted word that can save our souls (Jas.



1:21). Whenever we defile ourselves, tarnish our reputations, we bring dishonour on the Lord and His church, thereby subjecting ourselves over to the works of the flesh (Gal. 5: 19-21). Indeed, we must reckon with the word of God that no iniquity shall stand before our God. The Bible says, "*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*" (Heb. 4:15-16). Without uprightness, we will find it challenging to approach the throne of God. Hence, we must make every effort to live right. Paul says, "*Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. Nevertheless, you were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God*" (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Fourth, I am determined to be a vessel in God's hands to reach the lost souls. As Paul proclaimed the testimony of God, he said: "For I determined to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Like Paul, we must resolve that we will preach Christ to the lost world (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15). There are many who believe that to preach Christ is to preach only the facts about Jesus and not his doctrine/teaching. Apostle Paul says, "For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (2 Cor. 4:5). Preaching Christ is the same as preaching the word or the gospel. The latter is apparent in Acts 8:4-5: "Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached

Christ to them." In other words, Philip preached the same thing as those scattered preached. Remarkably, verse 35 of the same chapter reads: "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him." The significance of this verse is that one cannot preach about Christ in isolation and independent of His word.

Equally noted is that preaching Jesus involves water baptism. Since Philip was preaching on this occasion, it stands to reason that he introduced the matter of baptism because the Ethiopian asked about being baptized as soon as they came to sufficient water. Thus, preaching Jesus, a part of which is preaching water baptism, is preaching salvation to lost souls. We know this to be true because Jesus died to save lost souls, shedding His precious blood on a Roman cross, that blood we contact in the water of baptism (Rom. 6:3-4). It is no small thing that Jesus commanded baptism for humankind to be saved (Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46-47; Acts 2:5,36-38). The only way the church will grow numerically and spiritually is for us to get busy preaching Christ. People will not attend our meeting place unless we first visit them. Even if they did come through the providence of God, the burden of responsibility is upon us to show them the way to salvation by preaching to them the whole counsel of God. Jesus did not require us to lure people with physical activities like basketball, table tennis and football games. The gospel is the power of God to salvation (Rom. 1:16-17). The Lord said, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel" (Matt. 28:18-20). The above is true because when a time comes when people no longer have access to those sports activities that draw them, they will return to the world. After all, they have not been drawn in the first place by the word of God. The same is true of those lured to the fold of Christ through food and material gains; when those



things are no longer there again, they will return to the world (Cf. John 6:26-27). May we all resolve to preach nothing but to hold fast to the word of life (Phil.2:16). Lastly, I am determined to let go of the past and press on toward the mark. Apostle Paul would say: "*Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil.3:13-14).

Brethren, we must not dwell on the past. We must put it behind us and move forward in our service to God. It is easy to allow church problems of the past to hinder us in our service to the Lord. Perhaps we have received mistreatment from brethren in the past; we should not allow such to obscure our thinking and hinder our faithfulness to God. If encumbrances in our lives draw us backwards, we must repent of those sins, ask God's forgiveness, and then move on in the service of our God. May we be energized by the song:

I am resolved no longer to linger,  
 Charmed by the world's delight,  
 Things that are higher, things that are nobler,  
 These have allured my sight.  
 Refrain:  
 I will hasten to Him,  
 Hasten so glad and free;  
 Jesus, greatest, highest,  
 I will come to Thee.  
 ([Palmer Hartsough, pub.1896](#))

## BOOKS

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Ancient Landmark Book One: 650. Get it via: <https://selar.co/kudi>

# 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 last edition.

### **The Spread of the "Christians Only" Plea — 1830-1849**

A new publication appeared — The Millennial Harbinger. Campbell wanted to expand the scope of his paper and felt the name "Christian Baptist" could be misconstrued. Though somewhat milder in tone, the new publication did not hesitate to wage war against the denominational departures of his day. It would be hard to overestimate the influence of Alexander Campbell's writing, preaching, and debating through these crucial years.

The spread of the plea was rapid and widespread. The work of the Campbells, Barton W. Stone, Walter Scott, John Smith, and others resulted in possibly 200,000 who were followers of the ancient gospel by 1839. The causes of this growth were rooted in the zeal of the believers.

"How is such a rapid growth, with no societies, no machinery, no central head or headquarters, to be accounted for? The answer is: They had a message, they believe their message to be the greatest discovery of the age and need of the world; hence, fired with the zeal of discoverers, they became propagandists of the first rank" [Homer Hailey, Attitudes and Consequences, p. 93].

Dark clouds were appearing on the horizon. As brethren rejoiced in their newfound faith and love, they began to meet together to edify one another. In 1831 Alexander Campbell published four articles on "Cooperation." He pointed to the obligation resting upon the church to evangelize the world. Whereas their plea was that any work done by the church

should be done through the local congregations, they were discussing how the work should be done. As the movement continued to grow, there was a growing sentiment for a stronger organized force than the cooperation meetings.

Some voices were raised in opposition, not to the meetings per se, but to the consequences of the more organized state meetings that were developing. Aylett Raines, writing in the Christian Teacher, strongly opposed these meetings. "He believed there were tendencies, which, unless checked, would lead to state organizations and to a 'United States organization of the congregations' which would be a dangerous consolidation of power" [Alonzo Willard Fortune, The Disciples in Kentucky, p. 166]. The subsequent years have proven his fears well-founded.

### **1849 -- The Beginning of the End**

In 1849, Campbell published five articles entitled "Church Cooperation." A general meeting was held in Cincinnati October 24-28, which culminated in the forming of The American Christian Missionary Society, with Campbell elected as its first president, although he was hampered by age and feebleness. Accounts of the meeting give the number of those present as 155 delegates representing 110 churches and ten states. This was determined to be a voluntary cooperation of churches that would send funds to the organization, which would in turn select and send out preachers, but in time it came to exercise quite a bit of persuasive power.

From the very first, there were strenuous objections to the society. Among the objections was this: "It was





said that the Book of God knows nothing of a confederation of churches in an ecclesiastical system, culminating in an earthly head, for government or for any other purpose...It was a dangerous precedent, a departure from the principles for which we have always contended..." [Archibald McLean, *The Foreign Missionary Society*, p. 20]. Indeed, more than once Alexander Campbell's earlier statements were used against him. His objections to such a structure were very clear. Although there was much discussion and disagreement concerning the Society, it did not result in a break of fellowship at that time.

As 1860 came into view, there was another troubling issue that arose — the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship. As the number of disciples grew, there were more and more who came from the denominations that held not the same convictions as the early reformers did. Thus there were two attitudes that were prevalent:

"There were those who believed the church should move on with the rest of the world and adapt the spirit of the New Testament to conditions that were ever changing. They held that, when not forbidden by the New Testament, they were free to adapt their program to changing needs. On the other hand, there were those who believed the matter of the church was fixed for all time, and the fact that certain things were not sanctioned was sufficient ground for rejecting them. The men on both sides were equally honest, but they had a different approach to these issues that were raised." [Fortune, pp. 364, 365].

As early as 1827, resolutions forbidding instrumental music and the title "Reverend" had been stated, and the instruments had no significant backing. But in 1858 or 1859, L. L. Pinkerton introduced a melodeon in the worship at Midway, Kentucky. The storm over this innovation reached full fury by 1864, and the

aged Alexander Campbell weighed in against the instruments with strong words in an article he penned in 1851. He charged that the use of instruments was an appeal to the carnal nature of men as practiced in the denominations. "I wonder not, then, that an organ, a fiddle, or a Jews-harp, should be requisite to stir up their carnal hearts, and work into ecstasy their animal souls...and that all persons who have no spiritual discernment, sympathies of renewed hearts, should call for such aids, but is natural." He further stated, "to all spiritually-minded Christians, such aids would be as a cow bell in a concert" (*Millennial Harbinger* 1851, pp. 581, 582).

One of the major arguments in favor of the instrument is that the Scriptures do not forbid it. But this argument flies in the face of the very principles upon which Campbell, Stone, and others sought to restore the ancient gospel.

In time, the use of the instrument became more and more widespread, and bitter divisions took place, as those in favor of the instrument and societies forced others out of their buildings and out of fellowship. There were occasions when those opposed to the instruments actually took an ax and chopped up the organ, but this did not stem the tide. By the turn of the century, 1900, the lines were pretty well drawn, and the division was all but complete. In the 1906 U. S. Census, churches of Christ and the Christian Church were recognized as separate entities — no longer one band of disciples.

### **The First Half of the 20th Century**

As the "dust settled," the conservative churches were few and small. Yater Tant stated that in 1900 there were perhaps twelve full-time preachers among conservative churches. Most, like my grandfather J. D. Tant, supported themselves by farming. Most of the college-educated preachers with nice brick church



buildings went with the liberal trend.

Despite such discouraging numbers, these years became, in the words of the Lone Ranger, “the thrilling days of yesteryear” for conservative churches. These were the prime years of men whose names became household words — Foy E. Wallace, Jr., N. B. Hardeman, G. C. Brewer, J. D. Tant, Joe Warlick, H. Leo Boles, and many others. The years of prosperity in the 20s and the depression years of the 30s were years of strong growth among brethren. Some sources place the number of Christians close to 500,000 in 1926. The message was spreading not only in the south but also in places like Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and the West Coast. The technologies of radio, automobile, and air travel also fueled the spread of the gospel. In many places, radio broadcasts had wide audiences. WLAC in Nashville had so many gospel preachers on the air that the station was nicknamed “We Love All Campbellites.” KRLD in Dallas featured two young preachers who were also law-school students—W. L. Oliphant and Roy Cogdill.

During this time, various para-church organizations were also growing. Nashville Bible School became David Lipscomb College, and Harding College settled in Searcy, Arkansas after brief stays in Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Kansas. With the establishment of Pepperdine in California and other schools, there was now a band stretching from Tennessee to California. Orphan asylums had their beginning with Tennessee Orphan Home in 1909, and in time others were added—Potter in Kentucky in 1914, Boles Home in Texas in 1927, and Tipton in Oklahoma in 1928.

Although a few skirmishes came about as the result of egos, in general, the time following the division with the Christian Church up until W. W. II was

characterized by doctrinal unity. The issue of Premillennialism caused some upset in the 1930s, but it was dealt with quickly and effectively with the resulting loss of only about 100 churches located mainly in Kentucky, Indiana, and Louisiana. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. was very effective in standing against this false doctrine. This unity is also seen in the numerous debates with brethren across the nation cooperating to present these forums for discussion. N. B. Hardeman had debates on instrumental music with Ira Boswell from the Christian Church, as well as debates with Ben Bogard, a Baptist. Foy Wallace had quite a debate with the notorious Baptist J. Frank Norris in Texas. J. D. Tant had over 300 debates in his life with all sorts of denominational preachers. These debates were well attended, and many conversions resulted.

Gospel meetings were often great events, with great community interest. The Tabernacle Meetings in Nashville in the 20s were conducted in the old Ryman Auditorium, the home of the Grand Ol' Opry. N. B. Hardeman was the preacher, and crowds of 8,000 to 10,000 came to hear the gospel, with many turned away due to lack of seating space. As historians look at this period, they are agreed that a spirit of unity prevailed. One writer characterized the period in these words:

“There was a time when Churches of Christ were known as a people of the Book. All who knew us knew that we hungered above all for the word of God. They knew that we immersed ourselves in its truths and sacrificed dearly to share the gospel with those who had never heard. These were our most fundamental commitments. We knew it, and others knew it” [Leonard Allen].

Recollections from some older, well-known preachers summarize the era. When comparing the church of



the 1980s with that of the 1930s, Willard Collins said:

“I don't think they see the glory of the church, unencumbered by denominationalism, as I did ... when I was growing up ... I don't think members of the church think the church is different from Protestantism. When I started preaching members of the church believed Protestants needed to be saved. We've lost a lot of that. It goes back to an understanding of the distinctiveness of the church. At an earlier time they really felt the gospel was a lot better than Protestantism.”

G. K. Wallace described his preaching in the 20s and 30s:

“Most of the baptisms were from the denominations. In those days denominational people would come to our meetings ... Denominational people do not come these days to our meetings and if they did they would not, in most places, hear anything that would lead them out of false doctrine.”

But other factors were also at work, giving a foretaste of the decades to come. Although several colleges had been quietly accepting contributions from churches for years, a stir was created at the Abilene Christian College lectures in 1938 by G. C. Brewer when many understood him to say that the church that did not have Abilene Christian College in its budget had the wrong preacher. A decade later, N. B. Hardeman and others revived the controversy as they began a push to get churches to support the colleges from their treasuries. Along with this was more material prosperity, as Bill Humble illustrated:

“...larger and more expensive buildings, the more affluent middle-class membership, the number of full-time ministers, the increasing emphasis on Bible schools and Christian education, and missionary

outreach all reflect a gradual but impressive growth ... After W.W. II the church enjoyed a remarkable growth in urban areas. As its members climbed the economic and educational ladder, the church moved 'across the tracks.’”

At the Abilene Christian College Lectures in 1939, Guy N. Woods gave a warning, which turned out to be quite prophetic. “The ship of Zion has floundered more than once on the sand-bar of institutionalism. The tendency to organize is a characteristic of the age. On the theory that the end justifies the means, brethren have now scrupled to form organizations in the church to do the work the church itself was designed to do. All such organizations usurp the work of the church, and are unnecessary and sinful.”

Brother Woods, later an editor of the Gospel Advocate, continued to sound warnings. In the Annual Lesson Commentary, 1946: “It should be noted that there was no elaborate organization for the discharge of these charitable functions. The contributions were sent directly to the elders by the churches who raised the offering. This is the New Testament method of functioning. We should be highly suspicious of any scheme that requires the setting up of an organization independent of the church in order to accomplish its work.” It was the Gospel Advocate that became a leading voice in the slide to institutionalism.

# Myth Buster

## Predestination

By Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

The steps to salvation are left up to the free will of man. No man is predestined against his will to become a believer, instead, his will is an integral part of his belief... A believer will "be more diligent to make his calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10).

### Introduction

When most people refer to predestination, they refer to the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election. This doctrine is the belief that God with no regard to the will of man, made an eternal choice of certain persons unto eternal life and some unto eternal damnation, and this choice is not subject to change.

Does the Bible teach that God's election of Christians is unconditional and completely dependent on God's sovereign choice? To answer this question, let us first examine one of the Bible passages which Calvinists hold on to as justification for their doctrine.

*"For whom He foreknew, He also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. Whom He predestined, those He also called. Whom He called, those He also justified. Whom He justified, those He also glorified"* (Romans 8:29-30 - NHEB).

**Predestine:** Greek word – "*proorizo*" meaning "To predetermine, decide beforehand", "In the NT of God decreeing from eternity", "To foreordain, appoint beforehand" (Strong).

**For whom He foreknew:** The decree of predestination is based on foreknowledge. God foreknew those whom He predestined. In what respect did God foreknow them? God foreknew those who would fulfill the condition of salvation. God is an all-seeing One. The past, present, and future are all seen by Him, so it is the believer's faith (which is a

future action), that determines God's foreknowledge. We must note that God seeing it is not what makes the faith exist, but rather God sees because it will come into being in time. All eternity is present to Him at once (Psalms 90:4, 2 Pet. 3:8). But we must not think His knowledge makes things the way they are.

**He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son:** We must also take cognizance of what is being predestined. The predestination Paul refers to is not predestination to faith but to glory. Predestination to faith means that all who would be faithful will be foreordained beforehand while predestination to glory, on the other hand, means that all who have faith are foreordained to possess glory. The primary difference between these two is the fact that one is a predestination of cause and the other of effect. When God said to Adam and Eve "*for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die*", God predestined a consequence for an effect. He did not predestine the cause. God throughout the Bible always makes pronouncements that are foreordained to happen based on the response of man, He never set the response on man in stone, and man is free to make his choice.

In essence, all those who believe are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that is, to be holy as He is holy. We are to conform in disposition, life, conversation, and glory (Romans 12:1-2, Rom. 8:9, 1 John 2:6). God has decreed from before the foundation of the world the declaration of Christ and the apostle. "He who believes and is baptized shall be

saved”.

The predestination of God includes all the laws, processes, means and instruments by which the result is secured. A man saying “if I shall be saved, I will be saved”, is no different from a farmer planting a seed, doing nothing and then saying “if this crop shall grow, it will grow”. A believer will “be more diligent to make his calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10).

### Predestination and free moral agency

From the above, it becomes clear that Paul's idea of predestination is not one that violates the free moral agency of man. As always, God has left man with a choice, despite His wish for everyman to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). The steps to salvation are left up to the free will of man. No man is predestined against his will to become a believer, instead, his will is an integral part of his belief. Predestination does not destroy the voluntary character of human actions, nor involve force or compulsion.

### Conclusion

From the exegesis of Romans 8:29-30, it is clear that the biblical idea of predestination does not support the doctrine of unconditional election. From the account of the Gospels and Acts, Jesus and His disciples urged people to choose to believe in God. Even Ephesians 1 (another passage used by the Calvinists), emphasizes the free will of those that responded to the message (Eph. 1:13).

God does not predestine our choices, but he predestined the means by which salvation will come to man. He foreknew us and our choices but foreknowledge does not override our free moral agency which God bestowed upon us.

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# IDEAL HOME

## The Importance Of A Christian Mother In The Home

By Victor M. Eskew | Florida, USA

The influence of a Christian mother in the home cannot be stressed too much. She makes her home. She guides and trains her children. She exhorts her household to walk in her footsteps.

The home of a Christian mother is filled with love, compassion, comfort, encouragement, forgiveness, and tranquility.

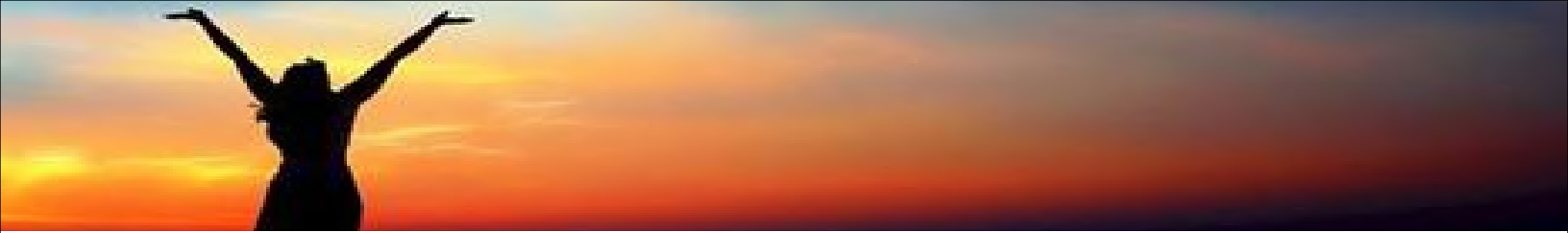
The societal influences in the US have taught a different picture of the home than the one presented in the pages of God's Word. Two people no longer have to get married. If they do get married, they do not have to marry the same sex. If they get married, they do not have to stay married for life. If a home is established, there are no basic roles to be found therein. In fact, we are told that men are weak and the woman is really the strength of the home. Children no longer have to be part of a home. There are many ways, including abortion, to keep from having children. If children are part of the home, they wield a lot of power. Parents who try to train, control, and discipline their children are looked upon as abusers. Today, the State (government) wants to be the dominant agent in the child's life until he/she reaches adulthood.

Christians are battling against the culture when it comes to the home. We are told our Biblical values are irrelevant and out of touch with the 21st Century. Christians, however, cannot allow culture to win. Paul exhorts us with these words in Romans 12:2, "and be not conformed to this world..." The word "conformed" means "to be made fashioned like" and "to be formed into a pattern." Paul exhorts children of God, saying: "Do not let the world mold you" and continues with these words: "...but ye be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

Our minds need to be "renewed" by the Word of God. The word "renewed" means "to be renovated." Thayer tells us that it means "a complete change for the better." Yes, Christians must go to the Good Book to learn how to live. Regardless of the mold the world seeks to pour us into, we must rebel against it. We must continue to be true to the precious truth (instructions) found in God's Word. We must allow God's Word to transform us into something much better than the world has to offer.

The Bible teaches that it is important to have both a father and a mother in the home. When God created the home, He puts a father and mother therein (Gen. 2:18-24). He gave each of them different roles in order for the home to function smoothly and in order for children to receive what they need to develop properly into adults. Both fathers and mothers need to understand, appreciate, and commit to their roles in the home. If they do not, the home will not be what God intends for it to be.

Let's notice the importance of a Christian mother in the home. We must emphasize the adjective "Christian." A Christian mother is one who has put on Jesus Christ through the act of baptism (Gal. 3:26-27). A Christian mother knows God, Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the church, and the importance of living a Christian life. She has priorities that are different from mothers who are not Christians. She understands the importance of worship, service, Bible study, prayer, good works, morality, and love. She yearns for her home to be in harmony with God's truth. She does all that she can to make her home a



“heaven on earth” for all those who live therein. She makes certain that her “Christianity” is not just a lot of talk. Oh no! Her Christian life is the fabric of her home. Christian mothers who do not understand these things need to do a diligent study of Proverbs 31:10-31. To become a virtuous woman ought to be the mark for which every Christian mother strives.

There are three things that every Christian mother needs to be within her home.

1) She needs to be the “homemaker.” Several passages of Scripture reveal the need of the mother to make her home her top priority. In 1 Timothy 5:14, Paul exhorts the young women with these words: “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” In Titus 2:5, Paul says the younger women need to be taught “to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” The home is the woman's kingdom. The husband is the king. She is the queen. She is the ruler, master, and manager of the affairs of the home.

Can she work outside the home? Yes. But, she must never neglect her responsibilities as the steward of her home. This obligation is what brings health, stability, strength, and peace within the home. Proverbs 31:27 summarizes this aspect of motherhood. “She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.”

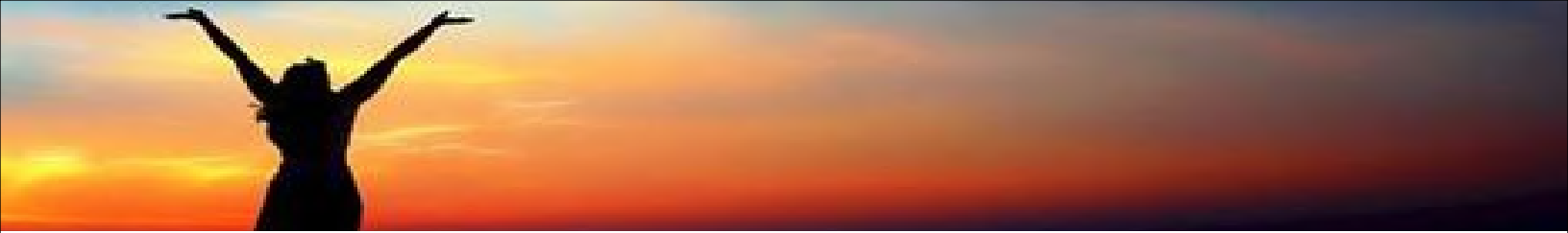
2) The mother must be a teacher in the home. A father has this obligation as well (See Eph. 6:4). But, the mother is engaged with her children much more than a father is. The book of Proverbs indicates that mothers are instructors of their children. In many passages, the instruction of a mother is emphasized. Early in Proverbs 1, Solomon writes: “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of

thy mother.”

Mothers need to be laying down “the law” in their homes. The need to teach the basics of love. They need to instruct their children in the laws of morality. They need to make certain their children understand the fundamentals of Christian doctrine. Mothers can also instill within their children what it means to work hard and be respectful. They can make certain their children learn what it means to be self-disciplined. To teach these things, mothers will also have to boldly and carefully wield the rod. Proverbs 29:15 makes this point clearly to mothers. “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.”

3) A Christian mother will make certain she is a good role model for her children. She knows “little eyes” are watching her. When those eyes are little, they look upon their mother as they would a princess. If the mother is true, sincere, and consistent in her manner of life, those eyes will still see her as a princess when they have matured into adulthood. “Her children arise up, and call her blessed” (Prov. 31:28). Her children see her as a provider (Prov. 31:14-15, 21-22). They see her as a hard worker (Prov. 31:16-19). They know she is a servant to others (Prov. 31:20). “Strength and honor are her clothing...She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness” (Prov. 31:25-26). She manifests to her children exactly what it means to be a Christian. Her children are glad to be able to call her “their mother.” Her life is so influential that all of her children strive to be like their mothers in so many ways.

Dear readers, the influence of a Christian mother in the home cannot be stressed too much. She makes her home. She guides and trains her children. She exhorts her household to walk in her footsteps. The home of a Christian mother is filled with love,



comfort, encouragement, forgiveness, and tranquility. A home that has a good Christian mother is a “beautiful” home regardless of the size and style of the external dwelling place. Long after mom is gone, her children still remember and appreciate her. They are thankful they were blessed with a mother who refused to conform to this world but was transformed by the power of God into a godly mother who intentionally fulfilled her role in her home.

### WHAT IS TOLERATED TODAY BECOMES ACCEPTED TOMORROW

Many years ago I read a quote that I found to be true. This was the quote: “What is tolerated today becomes accepted tomorrow.” Whoever said that said a mouthful and hit the nail on the head. Let me give a couple of examples.

In 1939 a movie was made that had one curse word in it. History tells all that moral leaders and church pulpits all over our country raised a sustained cry against it being released for public showing and almost succeeded in their efforts.

However, Hollywood turned a deaf ear to the protests and patiently waited until the hubbub died down. After the protest became old news, Hollywood released the picture, “Gone With the Wind.” Forty years later, in 1979, Hollywood produced and released a movie that had only one curse word in it (the same word used in *Gone With The Wind*) and parents all over the land breathed a sigh of relief and said, “Finally a movie that we can let our children go see.” It was *Star Wars*. This gradual “toleration creep” has led to most of the movies released today being filled with vile, filthy language that would have made a drunken sailor blush in 1939!

In 1953, a new magazine was about to be released for publication and a volcanic protest by churches and various organizations erupted. The publisher and

court officials turned a deaf ear to the protests and, hence, “Playboy” magazine became an American institution. This led to publication of similar magazines. This, in turn, motivated Hollywood to begin releasing movies of a vivid sexual nature which led to the necessitation of a rating system. Over time there has been “rating creep” so that what used to be X rated is now R rated, R rated is now PG 13 rated and PG13 is now rated G. The slow graduation of “Toleration Creep” has desensitized us to the point we are now accepting as O.K. what was tolerated with anxious misgivings a few years ago.

Sadly, many Christians have become so desensitized to this media filth that they, with their money and attendance, have succumbed to this “wile” of the devil. God tells us through the apostle Paul, “...do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but, instead, expose them” (**Ephesians 5:11**).

It is sad to see many Christians (even though it bothers them) allowing their children to watch TV programs and movies that promote this moral filth. The danger for their children, for the most part, is that they will feel it is acceptable for Christians to do this because their parents did not speak out against it or restrict them from involving themselves with this moral tragedy when they were in their formative years. Sadly, in some cases, the children learn by example when they see their parents rent or buy these movies and play them on their DVD sets at home.

“Be not deceived, for whatsoever we sow that is what we shall reap” (**Galatians 6:7, 8**). Brethren, young and old, let us take the high road of God and take a stand against these things. Let's not succumb to this Moral Creep. Beware, it is a device of the Devil to ensnare our souls.

**Dick Millwee via The Beacon**



# Salvation

## Making Your Call And Election Sure

By Samuel Matthews | Oregon, USA

We are commanded by Peter to give the more diligence to make our calling and election sure; to be certain that we sincerely have answered the gospel call and are God's loving, faithful children, saved by Christ.

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:10-11).

Loved Ones, let's begin this discussion with a QUESTION: What is meant by the phrase, “your calling and election”?

ANSWER: The word "calling" is from the Greek *klesis*: “a call, calling, invitation.” The Greek word for election is *eklogē*: “election, choice; the act of picking out, choosing.”

The phrase, "calling and election," MEANS God's call and choice of you. Christ calls all humans by the gospel (2 Thessalonians 2:14), to receive all the spiritual blessings that are located in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). Salvation/eternal life is one of those blessings given to those in Christ (2 Timothy 2:10; 1 John 5:11).

We answer the gracious call of the gospel through our faith (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 2:8) and obedience (Matthew 7:21; Hebrew 5:9). Thus, accepting the gracious invitation of God through Christ, we now become part of the elect or chosen body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22-23) - the church of Christ – the kingdom of God's dear Son (Matthew 16:18-19; Colossians 1:13). We are chosen by God IN CHRIST to be a Christian (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16), one of His eternal spiritual children (Galatians 3:26-27).

The devil has most of the world as his children (John 8:44; 1 John 5:19). Before accepting God's call we were one of his children (Ephesians 2:1-3). PRAISE GOD, in Christ we have been called into FELLOWSHIP (1 Corinthians 1:9) with the Godhead (Colossians 2:9) – the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19) – the Trinity (1 John 5:7-8).

True Christians have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus our Savior (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7). We have been given the forgiveness of our sins and indwelled with the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 5:32). The Spirit is given to strengthen us with might in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16-17), and as a down payment on our hope of eternal life (Ephesians 1:12-14; Romans 6:23).

True Christians have been called out of Satan's darkness into God's marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). Many lost souls are called, but few are chosen (Matthew 22:14). WHY are so few chosen? Because the way of faith and obedience goes through a narrow gate, “...and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14; 21-27).

Sadly, “... when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Praise God, for the elect or chosen, “... he shall come to



be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.”

In our text, we are commanded by Peter to give the more diligence to make our calling and election sure; to be certain that we sincerely have answered the gospel call and are God's loving, faithful children, saved by Christ.

Paul commands us: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates (morally corrupt and condemned)?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

These commands are predicated on the basis that WE CAN KNOW where we stand spiritually. WE CAN KNOW if we are a part of God's one faith (Ephesians 4:5), or simply being deceived in one of Satan's many vain faiths (1 Timothy 4:1-3; Matthew 15:8-9). WE CAN KNOW if we are truly saved and on the way to heaven.

HOW can we know these things? So glad you asked!

1. Each one of you reading these lines must “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). Therefore, men have a part (work) to do in their own salvation. This work of obedience is necessary for one to be saved (Luke 6:46). God also has a part in man's salvation. No man can be saved without God's abundant love (John 3:16), mercy, and grace (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Grace is God's part (Ephesians 2:8), and obedient faith is man's part in salvation (John 14:1; Romans 1:5). Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? (Matthew 16:16). If you don't believe, you will die in your sins (John 8:24). If you die with unforgiven sins you won't go to Heaven where Jesus went (John 8:21; Acts 1:11).

2. God therefore commands, “all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). If you don't repent, you will perish (Luke 13:3). The Father wants none of those made in His image to perish (2 Peter 3:9). However, the wrath of God will at the judgment be experienced by all who refuse to repent (Romans 2:4-11; 11:22).

3. Jesus taught that one must confess Him before men (Matthew 10:32-33). You must confess your belief that Jesus is Lord, the Son of God (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37). Many of the chief rulers of the Jewish people BELIEVED in Jesus, “but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him” (John 12:42). Those who deny the Son will NOT have the Father (1 John 2:23).

4. A believing, penitent soul still must be born again (John 3:7). Jesus says a person has been born again into newness of life at the point of water baptism (John 3:3-5; Romans 6:3-4). The one baptism (Ephesians 4:5) commanded by the Lord after His death and resurrection (Matthew 28:18-20) is a burial in water (Colossians 2:12; Acts 10:47) for salvation (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21); that is, the remission of sins (Luke 1:77; Acts 2:38) by the blood of Jesus (Revelation 1:5; Acts 22:16).

Believing and obeying the truth we have given you above will make you free (John 8:32). Like all the other spiritual blessings given to true Christians (salvation, eternal life, redemption, forgiveness...), our freedom or liberty is also in Christ (Galatians 2:4).

If you are not in Christ you have none of God's spiritual blessings. QUESTION: How does one get into Christ? ANSWER: The Bible says, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27; Romans 6:3). The Bible is Right!

Let's make it sure...



## SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

Dear friends, you must from your heart (understanding) obey God's form of teaching (Romans 6:17). The Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) teaches that one must be in Christ to be saved as one of God's elect children. A penitent believer who confesses his faith in Jesus must be baptized (immersed in water) into Christ to be saved by the grace of God through the blood of Christ.

Will you be saved if you are NOT baptized with the proper understanding? After the Ethiopian eunuch was taught about the Christ he was baptized and then, "he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:34-39). The same was true for the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:31-34). Therefore, REJOICING follows baptism.

When one is baptized INTO Christ, he becomes "a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore, the NEW LIFE in Christ follows baptism (Romans 6:4).

The facts of the Gospel by which one is saved show that "Christ died for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Do you love Him for having done so? If you love Him you will keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21, 23-24; 1 John 5:3).

The God of Heaven COMMANDS you to repent and be baptized (immersed in water) to have your sins washed away by the blood of Jesus; to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit; to get into Christ, to be saved; and to be added to the universal church of Christ (Acts 2:47). Then you can rejoice as you faithfully walk in newness of life (Revelation 2:10) and enjoy the promises of all God's spiritual blessings (2 Peter 1:3-4). We love you with the love of the Lord.

## MAKE ADJUSTMENTS

After a decisive victory at Jericho (Joshua 6), the Israelites moved on to what would be the second city conquered in the land of Canaan – Ai. In what was surely a shock to them, they were defeated (Joshua 7:4-5).

Afterward, it was discovered that Israel was defeated because of one man's sin – Achan (Joshua 7:10-21). Once this was discovered and the offender punished (Joshua 7:22-26), Joshua made plans to attack the city of Ai again.

Interestingly, they did not use the same strategy when they attacked the second time. Instead, they set an ambush, drew the men of Ai out of the city, then captured the city and fought the opposing army from two sides (Joshua 8:3-22). They made these adjustments and easily defeated them.

Sometimes when we deal with mistakes we have made in the past and try to improve our lives, we only focus on areas of sin and try to eliminate those. To be sure, we need to keep from repeating the sinful actions of our past (cf. Romans 6:1-2, 6-7, 11). However, we should also consider how to do things more effectively and efficiently. This is part of conducting ourselves with wisdom (Colossians 3:5) and making the most of our time (Ephesians 5:15-16).

So make adjustments. Just because we did something one way before does not mean it is the best way. We need to learn from the events that happen to us and use the wisdom we gain – assuming, of course, that it is in harmony with the instructions found in the word of God – to be more effective in what we endeavor to do.

–Andy Sochor

# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## Should I Stop Keeping Him As A Friend If He Would Not Submit To The Bible Doctrine?

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

### Question

A preacher said that any friend is not worth keeping if he won't submit to truth/doctrine revealed in the scripture. What do you say about this?

### Answer

The above statement as made by the preacher is faulty and not entirely true.

There are a lot of morally upright people in the world who are yet to submit to the truth revealed in the Bible. For example, you might have a very loving father, neighbor or classmate who is extremely kind and you share lovely memories together as friends. But such has not accepted the truth concerning what the Bible says about the one true church or baptism. Do you stop keeping him as a friend? Of course not!

Your very loving and kind father, neighbor or classmate is still your friend whether or not he is a member of the church of Christ. Hence, that makes the above statement by the preacher inherently faulty.

Cornelius would fall into the category of a morally upright and zealous man as the Bible describes him. Cornelius would be a friend that is worth keeping by anyone even at the time prior to his conversion. Would Timothy discard his Gentile father if he doesn't submit to the truth about baptism? (Ephesians 6:1-4, Acts 16:1).

In the same vein, there are people with very bad and evil lifestyles. We are told not to associate with them (I Corinthians 15:33). Of course, no godly man would be happy to see his child mingle with swindlers, smokers, thieves, fornicators, etc. Even if the child claims he does not do all of those things his friends do, there's the fear of being influenced. Hence, most parents have correctly cautioned their children about

the dangers of mingling with bad companies.

If we have Christians who then deviates and would not submit to what God has said, we are to withdraw from such a person (I Corinthians 5:5,11) but then not fail to admonish him as a brother (II Thessalonians 3:14-15).

I would like to emphasize that when we are talking about God's truth, we should never leave out **morals**. Good morals are part of the doctrine of Christ. I have known some preachers who would disassociate from others simply because they disagree on some doctrinal matter. But those same preachers have very bad moral lifestyles - such as lying, fornicating, swindling others of their monies and properties, etc. Yet, these same preachers would be the first to pronounce others as "liberals" if they teach something different from what they believe is true on a Bible subject. For these types of preachers, their definition of God's truth is only limited to "doctrinal matters" and anyone who would not agree with them on any "doctrinal" issue is simply not worthy to be their friend.

But I think that when we are speaking about submitting to God's truth, it must not be limited to "doctrine" but must include moral lifestyles. Thus, we see why men like Alexandra and Hymenues (1 Timothy 1:20) whose faith and good conscience have been shipwrecked, and even the man who took his father's wife (I Corinthians 5:1-13) needed to be "delivered to Satan." In such situations, keeping company with them by good people will corrupt their good morals.

# ADDENDUM

## How Strong Is Your Faith?

By Jefferson David Tant | Tennessee, USA

How strong is your faith? Does it measure up to the faith of the apostle Paul? A lackadaisical, easygoing faith will not take us to heaven. And another question. Are you sharing your faith with those who are lost, so as to help them avoid an eternity in the fires of hell?

Really, how strong is your faith? Do you live in a nation where you have absolute freedom to worship without the fear of persecution or hardship? I'm afraid too many Christians in the United States and some other nations take their religion for granted and are somewhat lackadaisical in their Christian lives.

Sure, it is good and a blessing that we have freedom to worship without fear, and we are thankful for that. But this blessing is not universal, as there are many nations where believers in Christ are arrested or imprisoned. Some are deprived of rights, tortured and put to death.

But this is not new. The New Testament book of Acts records persecution, threats and death for many Christians, beginning with the murder of Stephen in Acts 7. We can read Paul's accounts of the many dangers he had to face in his years of preaching the gospel. II Corinthians 11 gives a detailed account of his sufferings that are beyond our imagination.

Following is an account of what is happening in different nations. Excerpts are taken from an article I received some time ago from Gospel for Asia.

### **14,000 martyred for their faith each year, says Gospel for Asia**

As Christians prepare to participate in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church on November 3 or 10, 2013, Gospel for Asia is reporting that more than 14,000 people around the world annually are martyred for their faith. This number includes only reported cases.

A few walls and a painted cross were all that remained of this church, following an outbreak of persecution in the India state of Odisha, when more than 500 Christians were killed, churches destroyed and more than 4,000 homes burned. Christians are urged to intercede throughout the November observance of the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

"Jesus promised His church that there would be persecution and tribulations," said Yohannan. "Tens of thousands of believers, missionaries and pastors are experiencing the reality of persecution on a daily basis. Yet they recognize the honour it is to suffer for his sake. May the Lord lead us with his burden to intercede for these brothers and sisters."

The persecution of Christians takes both physical and mental forms. Many are beaten or deprived food to the point of starvation. Others suffer misunderstanding or mental torture. Parents have turned children out of their homes, and schools have refused to allow students to return, all because of claiming the name of Jesus. Houses are burned, clothes are destroyed and many are ultimately killed.

Earlier this month the elder of a GFA-sponsored church in Nepal was murdered while praying for the sick. In September 2013, innocent worshippers at a historic church in Pakistan scrambled for safety as two suicide bombers left 81 dead and 140 injured.

In the India state of Odisha in 2008, more than 500 Christians were killed, and some 50,000 were driven



into the jungles. More than 4,000 Christian homes were destroyed, and dozens of churches were ransacked or burned out. These believers faced these attacks all because they had turned to Christ. Many lost everything they owned.

"To understand what it means to take up our cross and follow Christ, we must walk in his footsteps," said Yohannan. "Join Christians around the world in spending time praying and fasting in tears over a map of the world where our fellow believers are suffering for their faith."

Dear Readers, how strong is your faith? Would you stand strong in the face of persecution and death as those have whom we just read about? Would your faith be as strong as was the faith of the early Christians who were being imprisoned, beaten and often killed?

It is good for us from time to time to do some self-examining to determine just how strong our faith is. Would your faith be as strong as the faith the apostle Paul had that enabled him to endure what is beyond our imagination?

*"Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they servants of Christ? --I speak as if insane--I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and hardship, through*

*many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches."* (II Cor. 11:22-28).

The Psalmist had a request to God: "*Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart.*" (Psalm 26:2) And in the New Testament we are encouraged to examine ourselves. "*Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?*" (II Cor. 13:5).

So, I close with the question for each one of us to consider. **How strong is your faith? Does it measure up to the faith of the apostle Paul?** A lackadaisical, easygoing faith will not take us to heaven. And another question. Are you sharing your faith with those who are lost, so as to help them avoid an eternity in the fires of hell?



# ADDENDUM

## What (Who) Are We Living For?

By Dylan Stewart | Alabama, USA

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” – (Matthew 6:21).

Famously, General George Patton was quoted as saying, “*Live for something rather than die for nothing.*” Many of us have made the distinctly clear choice to live for something/someone today, that being God and our Lord Jesus the Christ. Yet, the manner in which we live can make it less clear that we live for the King of kings. For example, many believe they can compartmentalize their lives into different areas. They believe they can have a work life, home life, personal life, and spiritual life, with no overlap between the separate parts of their lives. This cannot be so. If we have truly dedicated ourselves to living for and serving God, then our spiritual lives must become our entire lives!

Jesus warns against the false notion that spiritual matters can only be but a portion of our lives. He commands, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself*” (Luke 10:27). Thus, to live for Christ and truly serve God in accordance with this command means we must, as the old hymn says, “*Render not to any other, What alone the Lord's should be . . . Give Him all thou hast to give*” (Eden Reeder Latta, “Live For Jesus” [1892]). Jesus is telling us that every fiber of our being, every facet of our lives must be committed to loving and serving God. This means that we must hold nothing back from Him because God holds nothing back from us. We must truly commit and dedicate all of our lives and every portion of it to serving God through faith and obedience.

Jesus explains, “*Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be my disciple*” (Luke

14:27). This means our commitment to Christ must supersede everything else. We must commit ourselves to the Lord in the same way He committed Himself to us - fully and sacrificially. The command is clear: commit to serving Christ, leaving behind everything else that can draw your attention away from Him. Christ must come first in our lives. After all, “*No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*” (Luke 9:62). Those who cannot make this kind of commitment cannot be His disciple and have chosen to live for their own desires rather than the desires and commands of God.

Paul is perhaps our greatest example of one who followed the Lord's command of full commitment. The apostle said, “*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20). Paul no longer saw his life as his own. Rather Christ, and Christ alone, was his life, which began anew when he became a Christian in Damascus (Acts 9). Paul would even say in Philippians 3, upon recounting all the former things he took pride in, that all he had done prior was nothing for the sake of gaining Christ (v. 7-8). Paul's pride and pleasures came through living “*for Christ's sake,*” even during the most difficult situations (2 Corinthians 12:10). In other words, anything Paul viewed as not contributing to serving God faithfully was seen as unimportant and of no benefit. Can we say the same? If we cannot truthfully say this, then we are not truly living for God and Christ.

The Lord has made it clear the cost of discipleship: “*If*



*anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it” (Luke 9:23-24).*

In essence, the true cost of commitment to Christ is one's total self-denial, cross-bearing, and the continual following of and living for Him, which provides a picture of sacrifice, selflessness, and service. The cross that Jesus bore epitomized ultimate punishment and humiliation (Galatians 3:13). More than that, it fully demonstrated the love of God (Romans 5:8) – selfless and sacrificial in the giving of His life for the world (Matthew 20:28). What do our crosses look like?

### **Why We Must Contend For The Faith With Brethren Just Like We Do With Denominations**

**Continued from Pg. 19**

Who was Paul referring to when he talked about being “pure from the blood of all men” because he “ceased not to warn every one night and day” (Acts 20:26,31, Ezek 3:18)? It was brethren, right?

- Consider that it was brethren who Paul debated in Acts 15:2,7. If we are really supposed to “imitate” Paul as he imitated Christ (I Cor 11:1), and that is not just an empty mantra, then we will debate brethren too. Or the other option is to cut out the Acts 15 debate between Christians from our Bible.

- If we are really supposed to teach “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), then there must be no topics off limits, right? Then why do many brethren preach like there are some Bible topics that are too controversial to bring up with other Christians?

- Aren't we supposed to believe division is sinful (I Cor 1:10), and that we are to be “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit” (Eph 4:3) by studying the Bible, discussing our differences, and trying to reach

scriptural agreement? Does that only apply to differences with denominations? If so, why? Isn't division with the brethren just as bad as division with the denominations, or even more so (Psa 133:1)? Gospel preachers are fond of correctly saying “to agree to disagree is not true unity” when referring to the ecumenical movement, but can't you tell by their sermons to brethren that deep down they don't really believe that?

- Isn't it at best disingenuous to emphasize our differences with denominations (to show our distinctiveness), but to try to cover up our differences with each other (II Cor 8:21)? Doesn't integrity demand that we admit our own differences (faults) and try to work through them (John 17:22)?

- Because if we only correct outsiders and don't correct brethren when needed, then we are falling into the exact “itching ears” trap II Tim 4:3 warns against; we will be limiting our preaching to what the brethren want to hear, to what they already agree with.

What do you think “quit you like men” (I Cor 16:13) means anyway? Instead of criticizing those who have the courage to “be strong” and attempt to spiritually aid even brethren in this manner, we should do everything in our power to stand with them (II Tim 4:16), encourage them to keep it up (II Thess 3:13), and support their opportunities to propagate the actual doctrine of Christ (II John 9). Remember, the troublemaker is not the one that speaks out (even among brethren); the troublemaker is the commandment breaker (IKings 18:17-18).

**- Patrick Donahue**