



# 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

We are happy to present to you the 12th edition of Unmasking Sophistry Magazine. It is the last issue in the year 2023. We thank God for the grace He has given us for this journal's regular publication. As usual, this journal is designed to teach the truth of God's word and expose the various arguments prepared in defense of false religion and arguments designed to oppose the Christian faith. To cover a wide range of areas, various sections have been created in this journal and topics relating to each section will be discussed at every edition.

In the last issue of this journal, we examined various subjects under each of the sections including: *Were the Early Church Fathers Catholic?; Buddah and Christ; A Discourse on the Covering of I Corinthians 11; Quibbles that Backfired; The Union of Church and State; The History of the Institutional Controversy; Faith Under Fire; What Is The Proper Way To Refer To A Preacher?; Faith or Faithfulness;* and other intriguing topics.

Meanwhile, this edition shall focus on topics such as; *What is "that which is perfect" in I Corinthians 13:10?; Is the church of Christ a Denomination? Weddings and Funerals in the Meeting Hall; The Development of Papal Power; National Association of Gospel Ministers: How Scriptural?; Does God Call One Today? Quibbles that Backfired; and other interesting topics.*

You are warmly reminded that Unmasking Sophistry Magazine is available online and all editions (past and present) can be accessed and downloaded online at [www.unmaskingsophistry.com/downloads](http://www.unmaskingsophistry.com/downloads). The open door policy of the magazine is still very much intact – if anyone disagrees with an article in any edition of the magazine, such could write a rebuttal to it and we would be willing to publish it in the same issue to which the article he is replying appeared. Alternatively, a proposition will be set for the writer of the article and whoever dissents to affirm and deny respectively as the case may be – with the aim of knowing the truth on the subject matter.

We wish you all a Happy New Month of October and pray that we all become more steadfast in the work of God. We appreciate all the prayers and encouragement from our readers. We would continue to hold fast to the pattern of sound words that 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

## What Is That Which Is Perfect In I Corinthians 13:10?

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

*Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.<sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part.<sup>10</sup> But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.<sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.<sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.<sup>13</sup> And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

### Introduction

Many people today claim that they have miraculous power to perform miracles. But from I Corinthians 13:8-10, we can see that:

- Miraculous gifts (prophecy, tongues, knowledge) will stop at a certain time and will not continue forever.
- These miraculous gifts are “in part” (v.9)
- They will all be done away “when that which is perfect has come” (v.10)

Since these miraculous gifts will come to an end “when that which is perfect has come,” It is important to know what exactly is that which is perfect especially since many people today have given this verse different interpretation. First, let us look at what the perfect is not.

### What The Perfect Is Not

#### The Perfect Does Not Refer To The Second Coming Of Christ


A popular understanding of the “perfect” is that this is a reference to the return of Jesus. So many teach that Paul is saying that miraculous spiritual gifts will continue until Jesus returns. However, there are many problems with this understanding of Paul's teaching. First, what is the point of saying that the miraculous spiritual gifts will end at the second coming of Christ? Of course, those gifts would end! Everything is going

to end at the second coming of Christ, according to 1 Corinthians 15:23-24.

Second, what is the point of saying that right now we cannot know all of God's will but when Christ returns, we will know fully? Again, this is not helpful, especially to these first-century Christians who are arguing over spiritual gifts.

Third, Paul says that three things will remain: faith, hope, and love (verse 13). But faith and hope cannot remain after the Second Coming of Christ. The scriptures are very clear that hope that is seen is not hope (Romans 8:24). No one hopes for what he sees. Hope is necessary until we are joined with Christ. Hope will not remain after the second coming. Further, faith will not remain either. The writer of Hebrews teaches that faith is the evidence of things **not seen** (Hebrews 11:1). There is no need for faith in Christ when we are gathered at home with Him. So, Paul is describing a time after the ending of spiritual gifts when faith, hope, and love will remain.

Also, many jump to verse 12 and state that we have not seen God face to face. Therefore, Paul is talking about the second coming when we will see God face to face. But this is not what Paul says if we carefully read it. The text does not say *we will see God face to face*. Paul simply says that we will see clearly like being face to face, rather than dimly. Let us read the text from



different translations of the Bible: I Corinthians 13:12

*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. (NKJV)*

*For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. (NIV)*

*Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely. (NLT)*

Paul does not say we will see God. That is not the time frame. Some say “that which is perfect” refers to Christ. But in both Greek and English, the phrase indicates that some thing or concept which is perfect, complete, and mature will arrive. It is not referring to a person. The spiritual gifts were temporary measures to bring about maturity. That is why Paul stated that as a child you talk, think, and reason as children, but when you grow up the childish things are put aside. The same thing would happen with the spiritual gifts. Things at the moment appear to be riddles, which is what “dimly” means in [I Corinthians 13:12](#). It is the medium that causes the difficulty.

These are just a few reasons why “the perfect” is not referring to Jesus' second coming. So what does Paul mean?

### **What Is The Perfect?**

Like a mirror, the spiritual gifts gave an incomplete view of everything a Christian needed. Later we will be seeing things directly with no mirror in between. Later I will know things accurately, as accurately as I know myself. When the perfect arrives, Christians

will be able to see so clearly that it will be like seeing face to face. Since the partial refers to the limited knowledge and information the Christians had in the first century through the spiritual gifts, the most natural understanding of “the perfect” is a time when that knowledge would be complete and no longer limited. Thus, the perfect is the complete Word of God. James calls it the “perfect law of liberty”

*“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into **the perfect law of liberty** and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does ([James 1:21-25](#)).*

### **Conclusion**

The claim that people still have miraculous spiritual gifts today is a false claim. As we have seen from the New Testament, these miraculous gifts were available at the infancy stage of the church and were given to Christians to work signs and wonders. But today, these miraculous gifts have ceased as stated I Corinthians 13:8-10 and no one really possesses the ability to perform miracles today. Do not be deceived by these modern day miracle workers who are simply workers of iniquity or lawlessness (Matthew 7:21-23).

# World Religions

## What is the church of Christ?

By Rowland Gbamis | Tennessee, USA

This write-up is the transcript of my discussion with Brother Lesley Egharevba about the church of Christ on his social media television program. From the biblical account, I submit that the church of Christ is of God and not a denomination. We did discuss what the church of Christ is, what is a religious denomination, and in what way is the church of Christ different from a denomination.

### What is the church of Christ?

The church of Christ originated in heaven in God's consciousness and was established on earth in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following Jesus Christ's resurrection (Ephesians 3:8–11; Acts 2). The church of Christ is not a man-made denomination or a component of any man-made religious organization. Thus, instead of working with denominations, members of the church of Christ plead with all believers in Jesus Christ to heed His prayer for unity and become one in His blood-bought body, the church (John 17:20–21; Ephesians 4:4–6; Acts 20:28). Hence, the church of Christ is the church of the New Testament. It consists of people called "out of darkness into His marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9; cf. Col. 1:12–13). The church of Christ is a spiritual body housing all the saved who have believed the Gospel of Christ, repented of their sins, confessed the name of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and scripturally baptized for the remission of their sins. (Mark 16:15–16; Acts 2:41, 47; 8:36–37). Consequently, these regenerated children of God continue to express their love for the Lord in faithful service and obedience (Acts 2:42).

### What is a religious denomination?

A denomination is a man-made religious organization different from the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, as

revealed in the New Testament. For example, Lutheran, Methodist, and Baptist Churches. I mentioned by names these denominational bodies because of what their "acclaimed founders" said in denouncing denominationalism:

#### Martin Luther:

"I pray you to leave my name alone, and call not yourselves 'Lutherans,' but 'Christians.' Who is Luther? My doctrine is not mine. I have not been crucified for anyone. St. Paul would not permit that any should call themselves of Paul, nor of Peter but of Christ. How, then, does it befit me, a miserable bag of dust and ashes, to give my name to the children of Christ? Cease, my dear friends, to cling to these party names and distinctions; away with them all; let us call ourselves only 'Christians' after him from whom our doctrine comes." ("Life of Luther," by Stork, page 289.)<sup>1</sup>

#### John Wesley:

"Would to God that all party names and unscriptural phrases and forms which have divided the Christian world were forgot; that we might all agree to sit down together as humble, loving disciples at the feet of a common Master, to hear his word, to imbibe his Spirit, and to transcribe his life into our own." (Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons, Volume V, page 60)<sup>2</sup>

#### Dr. Charles H. Spurgeon:

"I look forward with pleasure to the day when there will not be a Baptist living. I hope they will soon be gone. I hope the "Baptist" name will soon perish, but let Christ's name last forever." (Spurgeon Memorial Library, I:168)<sup>3</sup>

What do these confessional statements portend for us today? The answer is simple: let us all return to the



church of Christ as revealed in the Bible. Jesus and His apostles taught unity without denominations, Jno.17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3. Hence, one problem we have today in the religious world is a lack of respect for scriptural authority.

Consider the following Bible passage:

"Now, when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching and said, "By what Authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this Authority?" But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things: The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?" (Matthew 21:23-25).

The logical conclusion from the above passage raises two critical principles: Authority is important when it comes to religious issues, and the source of religious authority is either God or Man.

### **In what way is the church of Christ different from a denomination?**

**A.** The church of Christ differs from denominational churches because we teach the Bible's plan of salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38) in sharp contrast to the denominations, which teach salvation through faith only; the church of Christ conscientiously strives to teach the plan of salvation precisely as revealed in the Bible. Therefore, in obedience to the Great Commission, we teach that salvation requires faith, contrition, and baptism. Those who obeyed this gospel salvation plan during the time of the New Testament were added to the Lord's church (Gal.3:27; Acts 2: 47), not Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian, Redeemed, or any other denomination (1 Cor.1:10-13).

**B.** The church of Christ is not considered a

denomination due to its exclusive usage of a biblical name. The church of the New Testament was referred to by several descriptive names, such as the church of God (1 Corinthians 1:2), the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), the Kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13-14), and the churches of Christ (Romans 16:16). As followers of Christ, we refer to ourselves and our faith community as the church of Christ. This name is taken directly from the New Testament, where we read that the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch. We honour Christ by wearing this name, and we greet one another as members of the churches of Christ, as mentioned in Romans 16:16. We believe that Christ is the builder and owner of the church (Matt. 16:18) because salvation is only found in His name (Acts 4:11-12). Consequently, through this belief and adherence to Christ's teachings, we continue to strive to live as faithful members of His church.

**C.** The church of Christ stands apart from other denominations because it has no sectarian creed. Unlike other churches with confessions of faith, church manuals, and creed books, The church of Christ acknowledges the Bible as its only source of doctrine. (2 Tim.3:16-17). In other words, believers are expected to adhere only to what the Bible teaches and not to give their allegiance to some human creed (Matt. 15:8-9; Col.3:17).

**D.** The church of Christ is not a denomination because it does not have any hierarchical structure other than the ones mentioned in the Scriptures. There is no mention of archbishops, popes, or brotherhood elders as officers in the New Testament church. Every local church of Christ is self-governing, with Jesus Christ as the head. They are overseen by men who are referred to as "elders," (Acts 14:23) "bishops," (Phil.1:1) or "pastors," (Eph.4:11) but they



all hold the same office. These leaders must meet the qualifications set by God before serving in the eldership role (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Deacons are church's servants (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13), who must also meet certain qualifications before serving. Lastly, evangelists are preachers of the gospel who spread the message to new areas (2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Timothy 1:3; Acts 8:5-40; 21:8-9). Nevertheless, I must add that there are some "churches of Christ" with organizational arrangements other than those revealed in the New Testament; they are equally indicted as denominational entities and must repent.

E. In contradistinction to denominational practices such as paying tithes, using instruments of music in the worship of God with organized choirs, speaking in tongues (gibberish), wrong observance of the Lord's Supper, praying in Mary's name or praying for the death, and many other erroneous practices, the churches of Christ exhibit a conscientious approach towards the implementation of New Testament worship. For example, we give because the financial resources of the church of Christ primarily consist of voluntary contributions made by its members, in accordance with their individual prosperity as bestowed by God (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7). The church of Christ observes the Lord's Supper each Lord's day (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10); they sing by making melody in their hearts instead of on some mechanical instrument of music (Col. 3:16 and Eph. 5:19); pray to God through Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5); and take their lessons directly from the New Testament revelation because Jesus said, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth" (John 4:24; 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). **Final thought:** the church of Christ is a spiritual

organization that God in Christ Jesus designed before the foundation of the world to accomplish the spiritual missions of His body, namely, evangelism (Acts 8:1-4; 13:1-3; 14:6-27), edification (Eph. 4:11-13), and benevolence (needy members- Acts 6:1-7 & other faithful churches in needs (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1; 2 Cor. 8:1). Therefore, all human institutions set up to do the work of the Church in evangelism, benevolence and edification, such as World Bible School and its affiliates, Tema "Churches of Christ Association" in Ghana, Church of Christ-Nigeria, African Claiming Africa for Christ (and many of such other unscriptural organizations) are all doing so contrary to the divine arrangement to rob the Church of its strength. Consider the following words of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians:

<sup>8</sup> To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; <sup>10</sup> to the intent that now *the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the Church* to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:8-10 NKJV).

I appeal to all workers of iniquities working outside the precinct of the Lord's church to stop dissipating their energies in unscriptural organizations because Jesus said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted (Matt. 15:13-14).

### References

<sup>1</sup> Truth Magazine X: 1, pp. 1-3 October 1965  
[Denominationalism\(truthmagazine.com\)](http://truthmagazine.com)

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

# DISCOURSE

## Should Weddings And Funerals Be Conducted In The Church Building?

The topic for discussion in this section centers on using the church building for weddings and funerals. Is it scriptural for weddings and funerals to be conducted in the church building? There will be a series of exchanges on this issue in this edition and the next one. This discussion was originally published in the February 1973 edition of *Searching the Scriptures*. Readers are encouraged to study both articles with their Bibles as will be published in each edition.

### Weddings and Funerals in the Meetinghouse

By Weldon E. Warnock

A feeling has arisen in the minds of some good brethren that the meetinghouse may not be used for weddings or funerals. They are saying that the church building was erected with the Lord's money, and, therefore, it may only be used for authorized church functions. This position, as I see it, is an extreme and inconsistent one.

It is granted that the Lord's money when used in building construction should only be used to erect facilities that expedite the church's authorized work. The church has no right to build kitchens and dining halls for social purposes, wedding chapels or funeral parlors. These things do not constitute the work of the church. But for the building to be used for a wedding or funeral is something else. No divine principle is violated in any way by such usage of the building. Really, the Lord never did say what could or could not be done in a meetinghouse. He informed the church how to conduct itself, but said nothing about the meetinghouse. Hence, the issue is a matter of judgment and expediency. However, in the exercise of this liberty, nothing should be done that is in poor taste or that reflects upon the cause of Christ.

Brethren talk about the meetinghouse not being holy, then turn around and treat it like Solomon's temple. Some chide the too liberal brethren for their "dedication service" of the new church building. Right here is where the matter becomes rather ironic.

The too liberal brethren "dedicate" their building to the Lord and then make a big ado about it not being sacred. Whereas some of the "conservative" brethren would have nothing to do with a "dedicatorial service" but act toward the building as though it was a sacred shrine on holy ground. I see a little taint of the Catholic attitude in this concept of the meetinghouse.

If no weddings or funerals may be conducted in the building because they are not functions of the church, then we are going to have to quit socializing before and after worship. Everything in the world (an exaggeration, wew) is discussed by the brethren in the building — from little junior's cutting of teeth to the number of coons old Blue treed the night before. These things must come to a halt if consistency is to be attained. There can be no conversation, other than on the Bible until you get off church property. After all, the church's money was not spent to provide a place to discuss coon hunting.

Too, I am certain that the church's yard and parking area bear the same relationship to this problem as the meetinghouse does. I do not think that one can logically say that the building should be anymore restricted than the outside premises. Both were bought with the same money. Hence, if the meetinghouse may not be used for anything other than church functions, then neither may the outside





restricted than the outside premises. Both were bought with the same money. Hence, if the meetinghouse may not be used for anything other than church functions, then neither may the outside grounds. We are therefore forced to enclose the premises with a fence to prohibit football games, hopscotch, tag, etc. by the neighborhood children. Fencing the lot will also prevent the townspeople, in some places, parking on the property during the week while they shop or work.

Remember that the parking lot was not built for a neighborhood playground or a public parking lot. If the meetinghouse may not be used for weddings and funerals because it was not built for these purposes, then neither may the parking lot be used for games and public parking because it was not built for these purposes. If some brethren's thinking is sound on the meetinghouse, the same kind of thinking is valid on the parking lot. If not, why not?

But someone says, "The public will get the wrong impression of the church if weddings and funerals are permitted." Here is where teaching enters the picture. We must teach the public. Really, I do not know of any that has gotten harmful impressions from a wedding or funeral in the building. There are some that are getting distorted concepts and impressions of extremism from those who refuse to allow them in the building. One woman said, when her daughter, who had recently become a Christian, was not allowed to have her wedding in the building, "She was refused because she did not grow up in that church."

Our children attend the services of the church all of their young lives, then when they get ready to marry, they are forced to go to another congregation's building where weddings are not objectionable. Oh yes, the opposition to weddings in a church building (at the home congregation, anyway) are right there to

watch and give their blessings to the couple. Inconsistent, would not you say?

It seems to me that instead of getting so stringent on weddings and funerals in the meetinghouse, there needs to be a lot of emphasis on the non-use of the building. Brethren will spend from 100 to 200 thousand dollars on a structure, then use it about four hours a week. A good portion of the weekly contribution is consumed paying on the debt for 15 to 20 years, just to have a place to meet a few hours each week. This non-use does not seem to bother some of the brethren, but mention a wedding and they quickly respond about the misuse of the building. Let's make the meetinghouse a center for special classes, training and development, and a host of other work that comes within the church's mission. We need to be better stewards of church property.

## THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD





# Should Weddings And Funerals Be Conducted In The Church Building?

## Weddings and Funerals – A Review

By Ralph D. Williams

Brother Weldon Warnock raised some good questions in his article, “Weddings and funerals in the meetinghouse,” in the Feb. 1973 issue. It seems more brethren are becoming concerned over these practices lately. *Searching the Scriptures* is to be commended for allowing the question to be searched openly.

It appears that three basic questions need to be considered as a solution is sought: (1) Are these activities a work of the local church? (2) Can church facilities be used for an individual / family need in providing for a social / domestic affair (1 Tim. 5:8)? (Though the state of marriage is ordained of God **how** it is entered is not). (3) Can the church facilities be used by a citizen to comply with his civil obligations? A marriage ceremony (of some kind not necessarily religious) is required by civil law.

The real issue is: **where is the authority?** If such practices are allowable a simple N.T. precept, example or necessary inference is all that's necessary. Positive authority is needed, not a negative “what does it violate” approach (“where does the Bible say not to play?”). Because brethren may like it, young people expect it, and churches “traditionally” practice it, doesn't make it right.

In his second and last paragraphs, Brother Warnock recognizes that the church has an “authorized work” to do, and admits the building expedites such. Surely, none can challenge that principle. Then it simply remains to determine what the “authorized work” is and use the facilities accordingly.

I would take exception to the statement, “The Lord never did say what could or could not be done in a meetinghouse.” Jesus told us that when He revealed the “church's authorized work.” Don't forget it's the

work of the church that necessarily infers authority for a building to begin with! If the collectivity did not have a work to do requiring a meetingplace, no reason nor right would exist for such a place. Thus, the “work” and the “place” to do that work go together. Therefore, the “place” exists for only one exclusive purpose—to “expedite the church's authorized work.” To speak of brethren having a “taint of Catholic attitude” in acting as though the building were a sacred shrine on holy ground” is prejudicial and serves no purpose in clarifying the issue. All will agree the meeting place is not sacred as was Solomon's temple. But still there is a principle of “sanctification” (a setting apart) involved. Is the Lord's treasury not ‘set apart’ to be used as He wills? Likewise are not those items purchased with those Divine funds “set apart” for the special use as the N.T. directs? Is it possible to be guilty of profaning such items by **using** them in a “common way” (Heb. 12:16)?

To compare weddings with “socializing” before and after services isn't parallel. If a special social hour were scheduled and all invited to come for that purpose we'd be comparing things of like nature. This argument is somewhat like the liberals reply, “you have a water fountain in the building,” when we object to their kitchens and dining rooms. If a “socializing meeting” were called, Brother Warnock would have a parallel argument; just as our liberal kitchen-banqueting brethren would have, if we were to announce a special meeting around the water cooler. But in both cases we're talking about individual doings which are **incidental** in using the building.

As brethren assemble, greetings are proper. Comments beyond that which is spiritually edifying





would be a matter for the individual to regulate. Personally I try to refrain from secular socializing, and keep in mind the purpose for which we've assembled. Granted this isn't always easy. If this area needs more emphasis, we should attend to it. But the point is a special service hasn't been called for "social visiting" as for a wedding.

I don't know of any churches or elders **inviting** the public to freely use the parking lot for the neighborhood children to turn the premises into a playlot. If someone came to the elders requesting such use, they ought to explain the lot wasn't designed for such purposes and suggest the inquirer look elsewhere. If a brother requested his family use the parking lot for games to facilitate his son's birthday party, I believe that would be more parallel to requesting use of the church building for a wedding. Wouldn't we expect the elders to deny such a request?

Of course how these questions are answered regarding socializing and using the parking lot doesn't really meet the issue of using the building for weddings and funerals. First, tackle this primary issue itself. **Then** if these other matters need attention for consistency and truth's sake, work at solving them. But keep in mind the right or wrong of "weddings" in the meetinghouse isn't answered by what **incidentally** takes place by non-members on the parking lot.

Liberal brethren have argued to justify their secular schools and kindergartens in the building on the grounds that it stands idle so many hours each week. Our failure to utilize the facilities more fully doesn't scripturally justify opening the door for unauthorized works. I agree we should use the building more for "special classes . . . (etc.) that comes **within the church's mission**" (Emphasis mine-RW). Brother Warnock's concluding words, as his beginning (2nd) paragraph, knocks weddings and funerals out of the

building—unless Scriptural proof can be given that such are **within the church's Mission**.

## LET US ARISE AND BUILD

Nehemiah was permitted to return to Jerusalem to help rebuild the walls of the city. When he assessed the situation, he saw the difficulties that needed to be overcome but trusted that God would be with them.

He told the leaders of the people, "*You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem so that we will no longer be a reproach*" (Nehemiah 2:17).

Yet he wanted them to understand that his plan was not based upon wishful thinking. There was good reason to believe their efforts would be successful. He explained to them "*how the hand of..God had been favorable to [him],*" along with the help promised by the king (Nehemiah 2:18). Upon hearing this, the leaders said, "*Let us arise and build,*" and they began the work.

Today, we have many reasons to be discouraged as we consider the work we have to do for the Lord. Yet we should not allow difficult circumstances, previous losses, or outside opposition to paralyze us in fear. Instead, we should recognize the goodness of God and the promises He has given us, and then focus on diligently carrying out the work before us.

So let us arise and build. God has given us a "*good work*" to do (Nehemiah 2:18; cf. Ephesians 2:10). Let us put our trust in Him as we labor according to His will.

—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.

At Hulbert, Oklahoma, in 1940, in his first debate with Mr. Ben M. Bogard, concerning the matter of apostasy, W. Curtis Porter introduced the statement upon Revelation 22:19, regarding people having names taken out of the book of life. Porter showed that in Philippians 4:3, the people of God had their names in the book of life, that the Lord told His disciple to rejoice because their names were written in heaven. And in the Hebrew letter, reference is spoken of about those of the church of the firstborn who are written in heaven. And thus, we have revealed to us a book which is known as the Book of Life in which God has enrolled the names of His people. That God declared that any man that would take away from the book of this prophecy, God would take away his part out of the Book of Life. But his part in the book of life is his NAME. And when that name is taken from the Book of Life, the name is not in the book; if a child of God turns to sin and continues in sin and has his name erased, he comes to the judgement bar of God Almighty, and the book does not contain his name, what is the result? Everyone not found in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire, so we are told in Rev. 12. And the child of God will go down to hell, therefore, because his name is not written in the book of life. In response, Mr. Bogard said that everyone has a right to the book of life. Porter showed that no one has that right except the people of God, except those who are His, who get their names enrolled, and you cannot blot out a name that was never written. When it has been blotted out it is not there, and so he stands condemned. Mr. Bogard illustrated by the Indians

and the land reserved for them. He said they were given certain portions of land, and all of them had a right to it. He had a part there, but some Indians fail to show up at the appointed time and they lost their part. All people have a right, all people have a part to the Book of Life, and it is not limited merely to Christians, God's people, but to the whole world. Porter replied and said, "Why, your very illustration cuts you loose from that. Because I had no part in that reservation, I wasn't an Indian. And nobody had any part except INDIANS. And the very illustration that you made proves my point. That only Christians have their names in the Book of Life and they are the only ones that have any part there."



In a discussion with a brother who was advocating the Oneness Doctrine, the brother said that faithful members of the Lord's church would not insist on a particular formula or set of exact words to be said by the baptizer at baptism. But the brother kept insisting that the name of the Lord Jesus Christ must be uttered by a baptizer before a baptism is valid. In response to that, O. Lesley Egharevba said that "the Lord Jesus Christ" is a set of words and a formula and since the brother insists on the baptizer saying that during baptism, then he is insisting on a set of words to be said at baptism. That is a clear contradiction to his argument on what faithful members of the Lord's church would not do.



# Church History

## The Development of Papal Power

By Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

Jesus' plan for His church included a plurality of elders overseeing the local congregation among them (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 14:23). Yet apostasy would lead many down the path to where there was one man who ruled over the universal church, and eventually even exerted political power over kings.

### Introduction

The pope is arguably the most influential religious figure in the world today. Yet there was a time when the one who occupied this office was even more powerful than the current pope. He would not only be the highest-ranking member of the Roman Catholic Church, but he would also hold a position of *political* power, even to the degree that he could appoint and depose kings. How did this happen?

When we began our study, we noticed that Jesus promised to build His church, and it was established on the day of Pentecost following His ascension to Heaven (Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:1-47). Not only did He establish His church, but He was also “*the head of the church*” (Ephesians 5:23). Paul stated this while Jesus was in heaven; therefore, we know that while He is in heaven, He is still the head of His church.


We also saw in our study that the great apostasy following the time of the apostles began with changes to the organization of the church. The New Testament describes elders as the overseers in local congregations (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2). They were accountable to “*the Chief Shepherd*” (1 Peter 5:4), which was Christ. Yet the plurality of elders in a local church, as was described in the New Testament, was gradually changed to one elder/bishop being over the other elders. Eventually, one man would oversee a plurality of churches. As time went on, a larger hierarchy developed.

In the previous lesson, we looked at the Roman Emperor Constantine, who is regarded as the first

“Christian” Emperor due to his alleged conversion to Christianity. This brought peace to the church, which was certainly a blessing. Unfortunately, it also led to a close union between the church and the state. This allowed the leaders in the church to become more powerful and influential. It would just be a matter of time until the political union between the church and the Roman Empire would lead to the church embracing the same structure as the state. Yet rather than calling the head of the church an emperor, he would be known as a pope.

### What Led to the First Pope

In an earlier lesson, we noticed how Paul warned about “*the apostasy*” that was coming (2 Thessalonians 2:3). He described this “*man of lawlessness*” as one “*who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God*” (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). The “*man of lawlessness*” was not referring to a specific individual; instead, it was about the attitude that would develop among those who were in positions of leadership in the church. Rather than being content to “*shepherd the flock of God among [them]*” (1 Peter 5:2), they sought to oversee multiple congregations, wider regions, and eventually the other bishops or “*patriarchs*” who exercised similar control over various churches. The “*man of lawlessness*” is not the pope, but it was the personification of the attitude that led to one man being recognized as the earthly head of the universal church.



As a hierarchy developed among churches, the bishops of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople, and Rome became known as “patriarchs” (*Church History*, John D. Cox, p. 39). As political power in the Roman Empire was concentrated in Rome and Constantinople (Emperor Constantine moved the capital from Rome to Constantinople in 330 AD), the bishops from those cities vied for control over the church. John the Faster, the patriarch of Constantinople, assumed the title of “Universal Bishop” or “Ecumenical Patriarch” in 588 AD. The “pope” in Rome contested this. In 606 AD, the Roman Emperor gave this title to Boniface III, the pope of Rome at the time.

This recognition by the Roman Emperor in 606 AD marks what we typically call the “official” beginning of the Roman Catholic Church. However, as we have noticed in our study, this was not an abrupt change. It had been developing gradually over time. When Paul warned the brethren in Thessalonica about this “*man of lawlessness*,” he said, “*For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work*,” but would later “*be revealed*” (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8). What started as a gradual slide into apostasy resulted in the formation of the Roman Catholic Church, led by the pope, which is nothing like the church Jesus established that we can read about in the New Testament.

### **The Political Power of the Papacy**

The Emperor of Rome conferred upon the pope of Rome the title as the head of the universal church. Yet the power and authority of this office would not be limited to the “church” (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church). Eventually, the pope would possess greater *political* power than the Emperor and would take the place of the Emperors as rulers of Italy.

During the time of Charlemagne, the popes assumed

the power of crowning the kings of Europe. When Henry IV of Germany opposed Pope Gregory and tried to convince the bishops of the Holy Roman Empire to depose him, Gregory responded by absolving Henry's subjects from allegiance to him, essentially taking his kingdom away from him. Henry was forced to travel to the pope's palace and beg for forgiveness. Later, Pope Innocent III deposed the King of England, who had opposed him.

Today, the pope does not have this type of political power. However, the office of the papacy can still exert political *influence* throughout the world.

### **What Catholics Believe about the Pope**

Catholics believe that the apostle Peter was the first pope. Jesus said, “*I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven*” (Matthew 16:18-19). Catholics believe this statement shows that Jesus was designating Peter as the head of the church and transferring authority to him, and that “whatever official prerogatives were conferred on Peter were not to cease at his death, but were handed down to his successors from generation to generation” (Archbishop James Cardinal Gibbons, as cited in *Church History*, John D. Cox, p. 44). They believe there is an unbroken line of successors from Peter to the present day.

They also believe that the pope is not a mere man but is the “Vicar of Christ,” which means he is standing in the place of Christ on earth. Remember what we noticed about Paul's warning regarding the “*man of lawlessness*” and that he “*takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God*” (2 Thessalonians



2:3-4), which is an apt description of this claim regarding the pope. They believe the pope has “so great authority and power that he can modify, explain or interpret even divine laws” (*The Converted Catholic Magazine*, January 1946, as cited in *Church History*, John D. Cox, p. 44). This means that if the pope teaches something different from what the Bible teaches, his supposed authority to “modify” divine law means that his opinion overrules Scripture. Yet Paul said, “*If we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed*” (Galatians 1:8). No one has any right to teach a doctrine that is contrary to what the apostles originally taught, not even the pope.

### **Peter Was Not the First Pope**

On the claim that Peter was the first pope, a brief study of a few New Testament passages proves this claim is false. Consider the following:

- The Catholic Church says that the pope (along with other church leaders) cannot be married. Yet Peter was married (Matthew 8:14; 1 Corinthians 9:5).
- The pope may permit men to bow down before him, yet Peter refused to do this (Acts 10:25-26).
- The Catholic Church holds to the doctrine of “papal infallibility,” which means that the pope cannot err in his teaching. Yet we already noticed that anyone who teaches anything contrary to what was originally revealed by the apostles, which the pope does, stands condemned (Galatians 1:8). Even Peter had to be publicly rebuked by Paul because “*he stood condemned*” over his treatment of his Gentile brethren, and in doing so was “*not straightforward about the truth of the gospel*”

(Galatians 2:11-14).

Besides all of this, the passage that is often thought to be describing Peter receiving authority as head of the church is misunderstood by Catholics. Jesus said, “*I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church...*” (Matthew 16:18). The “rock” upon which Jesus would build His church was not Peter, but what Peter confessed: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus used a play on words. He contrasted Peter (Greek: *petros*, which means a stone) with the rock (Greek: *petra*, which means a large mass of rock) upon which He would build His church. Jesus' identity as the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the bedrock (*petra*) upon which His church would be built. Building upon a small stone (*petros*) would be insufficient.

### **Summary**

Jesus' plan for His church included a plurality of elders overseeing the local congregation among them (1 Peter 5:2; Acts 14:23). Yet apostasy would lead many down the path to where there was one man who ruled over the universal church, and eventually even exerted political power over kings. Yet all of this is based upon a faulty premise. Jesus, not Peter, was the rock upon which the church would be built. Even while He is in heaven at the right hand of God, Christ is still head over His church (Ephesians 1:22-23). We are not to follow the direction of the pope or any other man; instead, we are to humbly submit to the will of Christ that has been revealed in His word.

# BARBS WITH A POINT

## National Association Of Gospel Ministers: How Scriptural?

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

On August 1st, 2022, a letter was in circulation among brethren in Nigeria, inviting preachers in the churches of Christ in Nigeria to the 12th Annual National Conference of the Church of Christ - Nigeria National Association of Gospel Ministers. It was stated in the letter that the conference would be held from 15th to 18th November, 2022 at the meeting place of the church of Christ, Use Ndon, Akwa Ibom state. The letter requested that each congregation should encourage and support their preacher to attend the conference at Akwa Ibom. Exactly a month after that, another letter was written on September 1st, 2022 by this same association requesting for financial assistance to host the 12th Annual National Conference in Akwa Ibom. The total estimate cost of 3.7 million Naira was said to be required to successfully host the programme. On September 21, 2022, another letter was written by this same association, and this time, they were calling for advertisements in their proposed souvenir programme. The cost implications for anyone who wishes to place an advertisement in the souvenir were included.

On each of the letters, it is interesting to note that the letterhead reads "Church of Christ - Nigeria" with its head office in Abuja and a branch office in Akwa Ibom. Furthermore, there were various offices and officers mentioned therein including National President, Vice President, Secretary General, Assistant Secretary General, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, PRO, Welfare Officer, Legal Adviser, etc.

When the first and second letters were being circulated, I and two other brethren took it upon ourselves to write to the organizers of this conference, expressing our shock at the letters and requesting for

scriptural explanation for that. We wrote the letter on September 1, 2022 and sent to them asking for explanation. On September 3, 2022, I called the National President on phone and asked if he saw our letter, he acknowledged receipt of the letter and promised to respond but we never got any response. Two months later on November 3, 2022, we decided to write a letter of reminder to these brethren and requested that they respond to us before the event takes place on the 15th of that same month. Sadly, this is September 2023 and we have not heard from them.

On September 10, 2023, this association wrote another letter addressed to "the ministers, churches of Christ - Nigeria," informing them of the postponement of their 13th Annual National Conference that was scheduled to hold from 1st to 4th November, 2023 at the meeting place of the church of Christ, Lawanson, Lagos. They have postponed it till November, 2024 due to economic and security issues in Nigeria. It is strange that these men would not offer a scriptural defense for their practice but would continue in propagating this error. But what exactly is wrong with this arrangement?

### Errors of the Association

First, **it is an error to have a body known as "Church of Christ - Nigeria."** In the Bible, local congregations of the Lord's church in a region are not grouped as one single church. It is often **the churches of Christ** (Romans 16:16; Galatians 1:2, 22; II Corinthians 8:1). In Nigeria, there are several congregations of the Lord's church. So, the name "Church of Christ - Nigeria" is simply another denomination and not a congregation of the Lord's church that meets regularly upon the first day of the week for the purpose of worship and work of the Lord.



Second, **the association has an head office in Abuja and a branch office in Akwa Ibom.** But we know that the church of Christ does not have an head office on this earth nor is there "a branch" of the church anywhere (cf. Phil. 3:20). This association is simply another denomination without scriptural authority!

Third, scriptural officers in the Bible church are elders and deacons (Ephesians 4:11-12; I Timothy 3:1-13) but we find that **the officers in the "Church of Christ - Nigeria National Ministers Conference are all officers that are not found in the Bible.** Where is the authority for this?

Fourth, **there's no single authority in God's word for the existence of a National Ministers Conference.**

This is an idea that cannot be traced to the scriptures. In the Bible, preachers were sent out by a congregation for the purpose of preaching and teaching the Word (Acts 13:1-3; Acts 15:1-3). We have no record of a National Preacher's Association of any kind. If a National Ministers Conference is scriptural, what would be wrong if we have something like a "Church of Christ - Nigeria Elders' Wives Association" as well as "COC-Nigeria International Youths conference," etc. The existence of the National Ministers Conference is a floodgate to apostasy and any association of Christians may imitate such and create their own institution and generate funds by perpetual begging from congregations to do a work that God has not authorize them to do!

Fifth, **by what authority does the Association invite preachers from various congregations to attend its conference?** What connection does the church has with it? In the Bible, the church is the only institution that does the work of preaching and teaching. For this human institution known as Church of Christ - Nigeria National Ministers Conference to begin to invite the preachers of various congregations to a

conference and even solicit funds from churches and request that churches sponsor their preachers there, is complete heresy and total disregard for the authority of Christ. Little wonder why they cannot respond to defend their practice. Imagine the huge amount of money (3.7 million Naira) that this association was requesting that churches provide for them to host their conference in 2022. Suppose this amount is channeled towards a radio or TV evangelism by a local church, do you know how many people would hear the truth as a result of this effort? What if each local church used their funds to support faithful preachers to do the work of evangelism, would that be a good way to use the Lord's money or not?

We have no New Testament example of preachers forming an organization to solve "brotherhood" issues or deliberate on how to solve brotherhood issues. We must understand that each local church is autonomous and must handle its issues by itself (Ephesians 4:16). One or more preachers may be invited to help in solving their issues as they desire (Acts 9:38). When preachers form an association to solve brotherhood issues, they are going beyond their scope. Preachers are to do the work of preaching. The **National Association of Gospel Ministers** is a full fledged organization with headquarters, purse, officers, etc. and probing into church matters without scriptural authority.

It is sad that brethren want to continue to progress in error, despite the efforts that faithful brethren have been making to ensure that the scriptural pattern of sound words is maintained among the brethren. Anyone who is conscious of heaven will do well to disregard these man-made institution and follow the word of God.



# INSTITUTIONALISM

## The History of the Institutional Controversy

By Jefferson David Tant | Tennessee, USA

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

### The Yellow Tag of Quarantine

The lines of fellowship were further broken by the policies of the Gospel Advocate. Although discussions and divisions would continue for at least another decade, in 1954 the editor of the Advocate agreed to the idea of a “yellow tag of quarantine” to be placed on the “antis.” This harks back to the days before W.W. II and “wonder drugs” when those who had infectious diseases were “quarantined” and a yellow flag posted on their homes to warn others away. This is similar to the treatment of lepers in Biblical times, and even in modern history. Part of the blame for the extreme liberalism today must be placed at the feet of B. C. Goodpasture for closing the pages of the Advocate to further discussions, thus preventing future readers from seeing both sides and weighing the evidence based upon the Scriptures.

In this environment, the pressure on other institutions to “line up” would be resisted at the risk of losing prestige and financial well-being. There were efforts to close Florida College by discouraging students from going there, and by discouraging individual contributions. The administration and Bible faculty were pretty well committed to conservative views on the issues. In addition, business ventures such as Bible bookstores were boycotted if their owners were thought to be antis. Churches were pressured to line up and let their position be known. I heard of urgings to put some human institution in the budget for at least \$5 to let everyone know that they were not “anti” churches. Church treasurers who dared to voice a reservation about these schemes were told to either sign the check or resign and go elsewhere.

Preachers were threatened, fired, and had meetings canceled. I cannot tell how many meetings my father had canceled, but on occasion, he was allowed to go ahead and hold the meeting, and was well received. (The church found out he did not have horns and a tail after all.) They were told, “If you espouse such a doctrine, you won't have any place to preach.” They were told by elders not to preach on these matters. “Confessions” of preachers who recanted their “anti-ism” were featured in the pages of the Gospel Advocate, including names well known to that generation — Earl West, Pat Hardeman, Hugo McCord, C. M. Pullias.

The ugliness of a partisan spirit was manifested in many ways. Ads for preachers contained such statements as “No anti need apply.” Lawsuits over ownership of church buildings were paraded before the world. I was present in Cordele, Georgia in 1966 when a group of liberal-minded brethren came to the building with a telephone pole made into a battering ram, intending to break down the door and take over the building. On more than one occasion, they broke into the building, even getting into the preacher's study and smashing his eyeglasses. One night they broke in while brethren were waiting for them with cameras. One of those entering the building then shouted to someone outside to “Get the gun.” And all this was done “in the name of the Lord.”

I heard a tape of a radio sermon preached by Malcolm Hill in Waycross, Georgia, stating that if a child got run over by a car in front of the Tebeau Street church building there, the church would not allow the church phone to be used to call an ambulance for the bleeding





child. Subsequently, I called Hill and chided him for such a statement. He responded by saying he was going to give my name to the judge of Juvenile Court in his county because she was always trying to find homes for children. Sure enough, in a short time, I received a call from Judge Trudy Boswick, a member of the Forest Park church where Hill preached. She had two 15-year-old girls who had been made wards of the court and needed a home. In a few days, I had a home for them. That began a succession of calls from her. Then one day she called needing help for a 19-year-old pregnant girl who already had one baby. After talking to my wife, we took her and the baby in. Soon Margaret became a Christian. This was the beginning of over three decades of taking fifty or more pregnant girls into our home, and some into the homes of others, and helping to place scores of babies for adoption. And all of this because Hill thought he was “calling my bluff.” One day I asked Judge Boswick if she understood why I could find homes for these young people when the large congregation of which she was a member could not help. She replied, “Why is that?” I then explained that where she went to church, they were told to drop an extra dollar or so into the collection plate to care for orphans, but we taught people to take them into their homes. This good lady later became an “anti.”

In the debate between G. K. Wallace and Charles Holt in Florence, Alabama (1960), Wallace ranted and raved about Holt taking money to buy fertilizer for the church lawn, but wouldn't take a dime out of the church treasury to feed a starving orphan child. Isn't it interesting that Charles and Jewell Holt had, themselves, adopted four children?

Brother Wallace's softening attitude towards Biblical authority was seen in a statement made by Yater Tant in 1956. 'In Tulsa last year G. K. said that the Bible

contained no such thing as a “necessary inference,” and that he had quit preaching that twenty years ago.”

In short, by the 1960s a clear message was sent to the minority “antis” — go away, you bother me.” What once were defended as expediciencies were now defended as something necessary. One writer claimed that children were raised better in orphanages than in the home of Christians.

“We contend that the homes perform a service more effective than the average private home in developing habits of work and industry ... We contend that the homes do a more effective work teaching good, moral behavior than the home ... We contend that the homes are more successful than the average private home in making Christians of the young people ... this statement is no indictment of the private home. It is the best organization in the world” [Said by a defender of Central Kentucky Orphan Home].

It's hard to believe that a sane person would make such a statement. I worked with a church in Portales, New Mexico where the Eastern New Mexico Children's Home was located. A family in the University Drive church there had worked at the home for some time previously. They said they had never known a single child to leave that home and remain faithful as a Christian. It is obvious that this is not universally true, but it does cast some doubt on the above quote. That orphan asylum would send out trucks and busses throughout three states collecting food from churches but would collect more than they could possibly use. They would unload their surplus at a local grocery store and sell the products. That store was owned by a son of one of the elders of the church where I preached. They had one of the finest farms in the state, which was donated to them, and they had all sorts of free labor from their residents, so raised much of their own food.



On one occasion I was having a study with a family in this small town, and evidently, some folks at the church that sponsored the orphanage got wind of this and tried to move in. This family was having some financial difficulties, and the liberal church brought food and clothing in abundance. One day Naomi Bruce asked me if I could take some of the stuff away, as her house was getting too full. (I declined.) Then she said that the assistant superintendent of the home said I could have the children if I could find homes for them. I immediately went to her home and placed a call to the man, asking when I could come and get the children, as I thought I could find homes for them in a couple of weeks. He began to hem and haw, acting as if he didn't know what I was talking about. Then Naomi got on the phone and reminded him of their conversation. I asked him how many orphans they had. He admitted that of the 50 children, none were true orphans, as they all had living family members who could have cared for them. Of course, I didn't get the children. He was just trying to “call my bluff.” After Naomi was baptized into Christ, she told me, “They tried to buy me with things, but you taught me the gospel.”

A study was conducted some time ago showing that among the institutional churches, the average church member was giving seven cents per member per week. Thus they were willing to cause division over seven cents per week. And they accused those who believed in taking orphans into their homes of being “orphan haters.” What is abundantly clear is that the majority of the men and institutions that were centers of influence were with the institutional majority.

### **Separation, Growth, and Development**

Despite the predictions of “doom and gloom,” “anti-ism” has not perished from the earth. Bill Humble presented a more objective view:

“The most serious issues that churches of Christ have faced in this century is church cooperation and 'institutionalism.' Led by Roy Cogdill, Yater Tant and the Gospel Guardian, a substantial number of churches have come to oppose such cooperative programs of evangelism as the Herald of Truth and the homes for orphans and aged, as they are presently organized. During the past 15 years many debates have been held, churches have divided, and fellowship has broken. This is the most serious division, numbers-wise, that churches of Christ have suffered. Whether that division is final, or whether it can be healed, is yet to be determined” [Story of the Restoration, p. 74, 1968].

Writing now from the perspective of more than four decades later, it is obvious that the wound is so serious that no healing will take place. Counting numbers is something fraught with difficulties. Since we have no central organization to which statistics are reported, any number total can be regarded as less than absolute. However, brother Mac Lynn has done a commendable job for some years in collecting and compiling data on churches of Christ. Of nearly 12,000 churches of Christ in the USA, he has estimated that the non-institutional churches compose nearly 21% of the total of the combined groups.

With respect to foreign evangelism, contrary to charges that we do not believe in foreign evangelism, we have been active in sending Americans to other nations with the gospel, and are supporting countless natives in many nations. We just do not believe there is a scriptural precedent for creating a human organization or a super-eldership in a “sponsoring church” to carry out the Great Commission. And while institutional churches have built schools, hospitals, and other such organizations, we have





concentrated on building congregations.

With respect to the emotional issues of caring for orphans, some of the most egregious charges against us were that we were “orphan-haters,” since we did not believe in churches building and supporting orphan asylums. These charges were purely an emotional ploy, designed to cause prejudice and cause people not to consider the Scriptural basis of our concerns.

But the figures tell another story. Several years ago Eugene Britnell surveyed 60 preachers who were opposed to the church support of benevolence institutions, and they accumulated a list of 450 orphans and widows being cared for by individual Christians. Cecil Willis pointed out that 17 children had been adopted or cared for by the faculty of Florida College, which at that time had 25 families. Eight families represented by the editorial staff of the Gospel Guardian provided homes for at least ten children, not their natural offspring. If those figures are representative, that means that nearly 19,000 such children are being cared for among families in non-institutional churches. That is far in excess of the institutions built and maintained by the institutional churches.

But we had a “reputation” to uphold. It was reported that some women approached the late Robert Jackson, an “anti” preacher in Nashville, and chided him for his “hatred” of orphans. He then told them if orphan children came to his door wanting help, he would “pinch their little heads off.”

### Some Things We Learn From Leviticus 19:17-18

We can learn a lot from Leviticus 19:17-18, which reads in the NKJV “**You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.**” All of the principles of this text are also found in the New Testament, but the arrangement here helps us see some valuable truths...

- Rebuking someone does not mean you hate someone, but indicates you love them – Eph 4:15
- Rebuking someone keeps you from “**sharing in their guilt**” (NIV) – Acts 20:26-27, Ezek 3:18
- Rebuking someone (not forgiving them till they repent – Luke 17:3) does not mean you hold a grudge against that someone – Eph 4:32
- We should never, ever bear a grudge against someone James 5:9
- Loving someone means you will not take vengeance on them Rom 12:19, 13:10. That would mean we should never take vengeance on anyone today, because we are to love everybody, even our enemies Matt 5:43-44

- **Pat Donahue**



# Institutionalism

The Tema “Churches of Christ Association” is A Denomination That God Will Root Up in the Last Day

By Nana Yaw Aidoo | Accra, Ghana

Decades ago, specifically the year 1992, when Dan Mcvey was serving churches of Christ in Ghana as a missionary, he coauthored a booklet entitled *The Church of Christ in Ghana*, along with brethren Samuel Twumasi Ankrah and Augustine Tawiah. Brother Mcvey's assignment in this work, which is subtitled *Where Did We Come from and Where Are We Going?*, was to trace “Our Place in the History of Christianity.” In this booklet, which was evidently written with Ghanaian Christians or members of the church of Christ in mind, brother Dan Mcvey would begin to trace our history from the garden of Eden, where “The story of God's plan for saving man started...” (Mcvey 1).

After speaking a lot about the scriptural origins of the church of Christ, Dan Mcvey then cautioned, “However, we must understand that the church of our King Jesus is made up of people, thus its history is going to be affected by the pressures, stresses, weaknesses and misunderstandings of man” (Mcvey 2). The apostles knowing this, wanted to stem apostasy as much as possible, gave “many warnings about false teachers and corruptions – Acts 20:29-30” (Mcvey 3). Brother Mcvey would then spend time speaking about these corruptions, the first of which was centralized control. He wrote,

**Although we may strongly disagree with such organization,** we should understand that those terrible pressures and many attacks against the faith of Christians were putting them into difficult situations and their concern was protecting the faith. Therefore, they centralized the leadership to preserve the practice of the faith as they saw it (4; Emph. NYA).

I have highlighted this very point to show that in the


1990s, the churches of Christ in Ghana **strongly disagreed** with centralized control. Mcvey would then point out that as a result of these corruptions, “The Roman Catholic church gradually developed with the bishop of Rome claiming all authority” (Mcvey 5).

But all was not lost, for “From time to time, there were those who spoke out for reform and a return to more biblical ways of faith” (Mcvey 6-7). Certain men,

began to teach that Christianity had been corrupted away from the teachings of Christ and the apostles, and that the truth must be restored. This marked the beginning of what is called *The Reformation*. They began teaching that man is saved by grace through faith, not works of merit. They also began going back to more Biblical patterns of church organization and worship. They did not always agree among themselves, and at times their followers even fought one another. Little by little, they began to understand Christianity more as it had been established by Christ... (Mcvey 8)

These ideas would begin to spread like wildfire in Europe and eventually end up in America. But alas, among these “protestants,” “There were often sharp disagreements..., different interpretations of the Bible and differences in church organization and worship” (Mcvey 10), and, thus, the Protestant Reformation would itself eventually succumb to “human weaknesses and extremes” (Mcvey 11).

However, among the reformers, there were some “who were not satisfied with the progress made toward a pure Biblical practice and faith” (Mcvey 11). These “sincere seekers of truth,” most of them in America, where the landscape encouraged new ideas,



“began calling for a more complete return to New Testament Christianity” (Mcvey 11), which necessarily required “a more complete overthrow of manmade doctrines and denominations” (Mcvey 12). These people would come to be known as the *Restoration Movement* among students of religious history.

At this point in the booklet, brother Mcvey inquired, “What issues did they [the Restoration Movement] emphasize?” In response to this question, he wrote,

They realized that we must know what really makes a person a disciple of Christ; also, how should we worship and organize the church so that Christ receives all glory and man's tendency towards selfishness is minimized. They realized from the Scriptures that the true Biblical pattern of church structure is congregational with no manmade systems to confuse that like headquarters or human authorities above the elders and deacons of the local church...They stressed simple Christianity and the rejection of man-made names, creeds, organizations and doctrines as they were able to identify them...” (12-3).

But, as is common with humans, the *Restoration Movement* began to have problems by the 1870s to 1890s. Mcvey's assessment of the issue was that,


There were some who insisted on strict congregational autonomy, while others believed the Bible allows a conference or missionary society to see to mission work on behalf of the church. This issue along with instrumental music and certain social issues brought controversy into their ranks. By the year 1900, there was open division. Those who held more firmly to the original ideas of the movement and took a more conservative view of the Bible

generally referred to themselves as “Churches of Christ,” while the others took various names and moved into a more denominational pattern of things (13-4).

Dan Mcvey would end his essay with this piece of advice for Ghanaian churches of Christ:

Let us truly do our best to be the church that was founded by Christ and upon Christ. Our loyalty is not to any men or set of traditions, only to our King. Let us be diligent that we do not fall into the trap of denominationalism – that spirit that glories in divisive thought – but rather let us give diligence to be the reflection of Christ's love and truth in this world of darkness...Let us be committed to truth and the importance of submission to Christ with full confidence that there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...Let us be faithful until we welcome our Lord from heaven when He comes to take us away... (16-7).

You would be forgiven for wondering the rationale behind the aforementioned review. I have deliberately gone through brother Dan Mcvey's essay on church history for three reasons: first, because of how much he is held in high regard among Ghanaian Christians; second, to show what the churches of Christ in Ghana believed at one point in time; and, finally, to prove that history is wont to repeating itself and that those who fail to learn from it are bound to repeat it. Just as some in the American Restoration Movement moved away from **the original ideas of the movement**, and thus brought controversy into a movement, which I believe with all my being was a providential intervention of God in history, some churches of Christ in Ghana have appropriated some of those same **controversial** ideas, having fallen in love with a **more denominational pattern of things**.



I have in my possession a document with the title *Momeranda (sic) of Understanding for Tema Region Churches of Christ*. At the tail end of the first page of this document are the words *Tema Region Churches of Christ Cooperation MOU*. Then there is the preamble which states,

We, members of the Tema Region churches of Christ, united in our quest for improved spiritual growth, physical well-being and the development of our various congregations and its individual members, hereby agree to be bound by the tenets of this memoranda of understanding [MOU from hence] for our common good (2).

I know that someone is probably thinking, “What could possibly be wrong with churches cooperating and being united and seeking improvement?” I can assure you that if it were all about cooperation and unity and seeking “improvement,” I would not be writing this article. If I know my heart, then I am not scared to say I am a stickler for unity and cooperation. The Psalmist wrote, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” (Psa. 133:1). So, surely, being united is a good thing. However, even though we have a responsibility to seek unity, we also have an equally God-given responsibility to be concerned about how local churches of Christ are to engage in such co-operation and unity practices. We need God-given authority in the way we act in these matters, for not all unity movements are pleasing unto God (cf. Gen. 11:1-8).


What the churches of Christ in Tema have come up with isn't merely about cooperation and unity and seeking improvement but is actually **a headlong dive into rank apostasy and denominationalism**. It is a plan that centralizes their cooperative and unity efforts in an organization that the Bible has not

authorized and knows nothing about. It is the exact kind of organization that Dan Mcvey said churches of Christ, at least at the time he was in Ghana, **strongly disagreed with** and exactly the kind that stoked controversy in the American Restoration Movement and brought about **open division** in its ranks.

Under Article 1 of this MOU, the originators of this document note that “The name of this association shall be called *TEMA REGION CHURCHES OF CHRIST ASSOCIATION*.” Then, in Article 2, they state their aims and objectives, which include, among other things, improving membership in the Tema region churches, enhancing cooperation in finances and edification, improving infrastructure of churches in the region, conflict resolution among churches in the region, helping members with employment, promoting “the image of the church through marketing and public relations,” etc. As a member of this association, you are to contribute dues (specifically 5% of your weekly giving) to the association, attend meetings, and abide by the MOU. So well-oiled is this machine of an association that it comprises nine organs – a general assembly, a coordinating committee, a benevolence committee, an infrastructure committee, a financial committee, an evangelism committee, an arbitration committee, an edification committee, and a secretary – with the functions of each organ very clearly stated.

I do not need to delve further into this document for the discerning Christian to be alarmed. This association isn't just about cooperation and unity and improvement; it actually is rivalling the church of our Lord in its mission. Not only that, but it wants to treat the church of Christ like a “Fortune 500 company,” since it wants to **promote the image of the church through marketing and public relations**. How in the world anyone (elders, preachers, deacons, so-





called “church leaders”) can read the Sacred Writings and think this is Scriptural is simply beyond me. Is this what Jesus Christ died for and what the early faithfuls were martyred for?

If, as Dan Mcvey noted in his essay, we **strongly disagreed** with this kind of organization back in the 1990s, then what changed? If back then we **realized from the Scriptures that the true Biblical pattern of church structure is congregational with no manmade systems to confuse that, like headquarters or human authorities above the elders and deacons of the local church**, then where has God made changes to His requirements in His word today? Or did we pretend to believe something we really didn't believe? If we were right then, then we are wrong now. And if we were wrong then, then we really have a lot of apologizing to do to the denominations, whom over the years we have denounced for organizing themselves after the “commandments of men.”


I do not believe we were wrong. I am certain the Bible teaches that **the true Biblical pattern of church structure is congregational with no manmade systems to confuse that, like headquarters or human authorities above the elders and deacons of the local church**. And thus, the so-called *Tema Region Churches of Christ Association* is an unauthorized, yea, **sinful institution** with no right whatsoever to exist. Please take note of this. The issue is not about whether churches of Christ should be united or can cooperate. **Rather, the issue is about whether churches of Christ have Scriptural authority to form associations in order to centralize their cooperative and unity efforts, with those institutions supplanting the local churches in the work that God has given them to do**. I believe the Bible's answer is a great, big, no, and, thus, the path

our forebears in the faith traveled was the right one.

What is wrong with the Tema Region Churches Association? Following are the reasons why it is wrong:

**First, it is not authorized by God's word.** Paul wrote, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). To do something **in the name of someone** is to do that thing by the power or authority of that person (cf. Acts 4:7). Thus, we see from this text that whatever we teach and practice must be by the authority of Christ. Where God has authorized in His word, He has done so explicitly (e.g., 1 Tim. 2:12), implicitly (e.g., Matt. 22:29-32), or by example (e.g., Acts 20:7). Where is the explicit statement in the Scriptures for an association of churches of Christ? Where is it taught implicitly? And where is the example of the early church in this regard? Then again, Scriptural authority necessitates **respecting God's silence** or not going beyond the things that are written (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 John 9). God is not an idol who cannot speak for Himself. Hence, His silence or the silence of the Scriptures is not permissive. It is prohibitory (cf. Mark 7:1-7 – notice that God was silent on the issue of religious handwashing in the OT). The *Tema Region Churches Association* does not respect the silence of God or the Scriptures.

**Second, it presumes to do the work of the church or act as a church when it is not the church in any sense of the word but a denomination.** The association calls itself **Tema Churches of Christ Association**, thus, applying a Scriptural name to an unscriptural thing. The old restorers were saying, “we should call Bible things by Bible names.” This association is doing the exact opposite. The word *church* is **never** used in the Bible to refer to a manmade organization. It is used



to refer to the blood-bought body of Christ, either in a universal sense (cf. Matt. 16:18) or a local sense (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2). Other uses of the word to refer to the Jews or an assembly are irrelevant to this discussion. The universal church is all of those whom Christ has saved in the entire world. Of that number, only God knows certainly (2 Tim. 2:19). The churches of Christ in Ghana alone do **not** constitute the universal church. I do not think those preachers who say we should go beyond the local church and set our sights on the universal church really understand what it is they are saying. The universal church comprises all whom Christ has saved in the **entire world** and not just in Ghana alone.


Furthermore, the universal church is a combination of heaven and earth (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:14-15). And so, the very idea of working through the universal church is as possible and feasible as counting the number of hairs on your head. It is for this reason why in the New Testament, the universal church is given no collective function. “It does not have a collective work, time of assembly, or meeting place” (Bailey). And certainly, it does not convene to decide its affairs or clamor “for improved spiritual growth, physical well-being and the development of our various congregations and its individual members.” The only religious organization in the New Testament is the local church (cf. Phil. 1:1). And as I have already pointed out, the word *church* is used in reference to the universal church or the local church alone. The Tema Association is neither the universal church nor a local church. It is an association of churches, larger than the local church but smaller than the universal. Hence, it is a denomination. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines a “denomination” as, “A large group of religious congregations united under a common faith and name and administratively organized.” This is an

accurate description of the Tema Association. Yet, it goes by the name *churches of Christ* and presumes to act as the church.

**Third, since it presumes to act as a church, it also presumes to be the realm where God receives glory when God has already specified where He wants to receive His glory.** Paul wrote, “unto him, be glory in the church [not in the association] and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever” (Eph. 3:21).

**Fourth, it presumes to improve the efficiency of the work of the local church.** The association says its quest is “for **improved** spiritual growth, physical well-being and the development” (Emp. NYA) of the churches in the association. However, it goes without saying that any organization designed to give greater efficiency to the work of the local church is an attempt to improve on God’s plan, which makes humans wiser than God and also makes God a liar for saying the Scriptures thoroughly and completely furnish the church unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

**Fifth, it violates the autonomy of the local church.** It does this in at least three ways, first, by making decisions for the churches. According to the MOU, “the General Assembly shall be the highest decision-making body of the Association” (4). Also, the Assembly “shall have the power to make by-laws which shall bind the Association” (4). Second, by overseeing portions of the Lord’s treasury that has been contributed by church members and is to be under the oversight of the local congregation. Third, by planning evangelism for the churches in the Tema region. According to the MOU, it is the responsibility of the evangelism committee, to “plan an execute **all** evangelism program(sic)/projects in the Tema region” (Emp. NYA). One wonders what the point of the local church, then, is. There is more, but I believe these drive home the point.



**Sixth, it leaves the world with the impression that the churches of Christ support an ecclesiastical hierarchy.** We are Christians only, folks. Jesus Christ is our only Head (Col. 1:18). And each congregation is self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

**Seventh, by its actions it preaches the social gospel.**

The Tema **Churches of Christ** association says in its aims and objectives that it is going “to assist members in the area of employment.” I know that brethren need to work, and certainly if a brother or sister has connections, he should help a brother or sister in need of work. But, please, if we are going to speak as the oracles of God, then give me the book, chapter, and verse that says it is the work and mission of the church (not the individual Christian, mind) to seek employment for members.

**Eight, it has its own rules of order.** The Tema Churches of Christ association have put the New Testament aside as the only rule of faith and practice for the church of Christ and organized this MOU, thereby eliminating Christ as Head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22-23).

**Ninth, it could be a recipe for doctrinal disaster.** Since it is the work of the edification committee to “develop literature and printed (sic) for use in contracting churches especially for integrating new converts, children bible classes,” who is to say that error at the top, among the “specialists” (MOU 9), wouldn't lead all the congregations astray?

**Last but not least, it is going to get brethren to compete with each other for positions of authority in the association.** But our Lord said,

Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great

among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:25-28).

The foregoing reasons are what is wrong with the Tema Region Churches Association. I do not know if this organization is already in place or is in the pipeline. Either way, I hope the brethren, elders, deacons, and preachers, many of whom were taught by Dan Mcvey, would reconsider this course of action and heed his advice to **be diligent that we do not fall into the trap of denominationalism – that spirit that glories in divisive thought.**

When all is said and done, the *Tema Churches of Christ Association* is an unbiblical, man-made, denomination. The axe is laid to its root and it will be cast into the fire (Matt. 3:10)

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# Myth Buster

Does God still call people today?

By Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

God has called every Christian and is still calling **every person** in the world because it is not His desire for anyone to perish (2 Pet 3:9). This is the holy calling that we find in the New Testament (II Tim. 1:9).

Throughout the Bible, God called people to carry out His will. He called Samuel (1 Sam. 3:4-10), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-8) and many other persons through different means and for different purposes. Today, many “religious leaders” have one thing in common and that is the claim to have been called by God. This raises a very important question: “Does God still call people today?” To answer this question truthfully, we would have to examine the scriptures, not our own experiences, that of others, or our feelings. Without further ado, let us examine the scriptures.

### We have all been called by God

The simple truth is that God still calls people. In fact, God is **calling every person**. The scriptures provide irrefutable proof that the gospel is God's call to every creature. Let's examine the following scriptures.

“To which **he called you through our Good News, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (2 Thes. 2:14).

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, that you may proclaim the excellence of him **who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light**” (1 Pet. 2:9).

“Therefore, brothers be more diligent to make your **calling and election sure**. For if you do these things, you will never stumble” (2 Pet. 1:12). See also (Eph 4:1, Rom. 8:28-30, 1 Cor. 1:26, 1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 1:9, 1 Pet. 1:15).

These passages do not in any way indicate a private call which is only available to certain persons. As a matter of fact, Christians are tasked with taking God's call to

**all nations** (Matt. 28:19). Not all those who hear God's call obey it. Romans 10:15-16 says “*And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written “How beautiful are those who bring **the good news!**” But not everyone has obeyed the gospel, for Isaiah asks, “Lord who has believed our message?”* The process of God's call is not through subjective encounters but by the Good News (the Gospel) which God has tasked every believer with sharing.

### Does God call people to church offices?

Some persons concede that we have all being called but argue that God “**specially**” calls people to certain offices. It is not strange for people to assume certain titles after being “called.” These roles include apostle, reverend, general overseer, pastor, and many more. This premise is also false because it has no root in the scriptures.

Elders and deacons are the two recognized leadership offices in the New Testament as we see in 1 Timothy chapter 3. 1 Tim. 3:1 says “*This is a faithful saying: If someone **aspires** to the office of overseer, he **desires** a good work.*” Paul does not say, “If anyone wants to be an overseer, he must have a special, subjective call from God.” He says rather that one has to desire it and must also be qualified for it (1 Tim. 3:2-13). The duty of church leadership is a sober and informed commitment, and the qualifications ensures that one who would undertake this duty is well equipped for the duty. These instructions are not simply disposable; they are given by the inspiration of God, they are God's word. it is preposterous to claim that God violates His own instructions.



### God is not the author of confusion

Those who claim to have been called also claimed to have received divine instructions from God, this is one of the major sources of irregularities in Christian practices. It leaves one wondering how the same God could give different and conflicting instructions to people. We know for a fact that God is not the author of confusion and that the New Testament is in fact the only true instructions for Christians. 2 Peter 1 verse 3 says “*seeing that his divine power has granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and virtue.*” **All things**, not *some things*, this simply proves the sufficiency of the scriptures as God's instructions.

Furthermore, the Bible warns that anyone who brings a different message other than that preached by the apostles is to be cursed “*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed*” (Galatians 1:8).

The pertinent question remains “***Is God an author of confusion?***” Will God say He has revealed **all** that pertains to life and godliness and still turn around to reveal some more? Will God hand out different gospels to individuals despite His words stating clearly that there will be no Gospel other than that which was preached by the apostles? The answer is **NO**, God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33) and neither is He confused. God's will remain steadfast. The scriptures tell us that “*God is not a man, that He should lie, or son of man, that He should change His mind. Shall he speak and not act? And shall he speak and not fulfill?*” (Num. 23:19).

### Conclusion

At this point, it should be clear to any objective mind

that God is indeed not handing out special calls to individuals for any purpose and neither is He handing out different variations of gospels along with it. God has called every Christian and is still calling **every person** in the world because it is not His desire for anyone to perish (2 Pet 3:9). This is the holy calling that we find in the New Testament (II Tim. 1:9).

### OUR WORSHIP MUST HONOR GOD

In the last book of the Old Testament, God rebuked His people for failing to respect Him (Malachi 1:6-14). Even though they offered some type of worship, He was not pleased with it. What was wrong with their worship?

First, they were “presenting defiled food upon [the] altar” (Malachi 1:7). God demanded and deserved an unblemished sacrifice. Yet they were offering blind, lame, and sick animals to God that they would not even present to their governor (Malachi 1:8).

Second, they were “profaning” the name of God (Malachi 1:11-12). Rather than exalting His name as being “great among the nations” (Malachi 1:11), they treated their service to God as something that was common.

Third, they saw worship as “tiresome” (Malachi 1:13). It was too much of a chore for them to worship God in the way He prescribed, so they offered an inferior substitute.

We need to guard against the attitude of the people in Malachi's day. We must view worship as a privilege rather than a burden. We are doing it to praise Him, not to satisfy ourselves.

So remember that our worship must honor God. This is done by worshipping according to His instructions. He is worthy of our best efforts and thoughtful obedience.

–Andy Sochor

# Ideal Home

## Pleasing God In The Home

By Samuel Matthews | Oregon, USA

The Bible says, “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psalm 127:1). Loved ones, there is a challenge that goes back thousands of years; human beings have a desire to please other human beings. This God ordained desire can be seen as good (Romans 15:2; 1 Corinthians 10:32-33; Titus 2:9). Wives want to please their husband, and the husband wants to please his wife (1 Corinthians 7:32-35). Yet, all too often, living to please men can lead to wickedness (Acts 12:1-3; John 12:42-43).

We want people to think well of us, so we paint a pretty picture of words, or we hide behind a beautiful hand-crafted mask. However, when you get behind the pretty words and the image we have erected, there's one thing that matters most – what's within the heart (cf. Matthew 23:27-28). Mankind looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

Men pleasers are not God pleasers (Galatians 1:10). Jesus was not alone, because He lived to please the Father (John 8:29), NOT Himself (Romans 15:3). Many of the Jews during the days of Moses did not please God; they were an EXAMPLE for us - 1 Corinthians 10:5-6, 11). Only the believing obedient person is well pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:6; Colossians 3:20).

By faith Enoch, the seventh from Adam (Luke 3:37-38; Jude 14), was taken up to God and did NOT die, because he lived a relatively short life that pleased God (Hebrews 11:5). When we sacrifice by sharing and doing good we please God (Hebrews 13:16). When you please God even your enemies will be at peace with you (Proverbs 16:7).

The saying has been heard, “As goes the home, so goes the nation.” The truth of this maxim can be recognized by Christians and non-Christians alike. After decades of decline, the home is beginning to receive an immense amount of attention. Working without the objective standard of God's Word, however, many people have been trying to rebuild the home according to novel and ABNORMAL worldly examples (TV actors, selfish wealthy individuals, etc.). Our prayer is for the day to come when humankind will humbly believe and understand “that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23).

We thank our Father in Heaven, because He has not left humanity without direction (cf. Psalm 127:1). From the very beginning, while our first parents were still in the paradise of Eden, God established the home as He wanted it (Genesis 2:21-25). Homes that please God begin with the joining together of one man and one woman (Matthew 19:4; Genesis 2:22). God's plan excludes polygyny (one man with a plurality of wives), polyandry (one woman with a plurality of husbands). God underscored this fact when He presented the woman to Adam and said: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

Also EXCLUDED in God's plan for the home is the concept of homosexual marriage. The Creator did not present Adam with a choice between Eve and another male companion—He made only woman. Adam was not incomplete simply because he lacked human companionship; he lacked female human companionship. Further, the Word of God categorically condemns homosexual behavior





(Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26ff.; 1 Corinthians 6:9, etc.).

Jesus based His teaching about the home upon the original pattern established by God. He said: "...He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4-6). Thus, sexual relations are authorized only within marriage (cf. Proverbs 5:15-21).

All deviations from God's "one flesh" pattern are condemned: "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers (fornicators) and adulterers God will judge" (Hebrews 13:4).

The home that follows the divine pattern is one that will strive to be in fellowship with God. Genesis 3:8 portrays the Creator as "walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Precisely what this entailed we can only conjecture (cf. John 1:18), but it seems that Adam was not unaccustomed to this kind of communion (how else can we account for his impulse to hide?).

When Eve was tempted by the serpent, she repeated God's injunction (along with a few of her own added words) regarding the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:3). When Cain was born, Eve credited God (Genesis 4:1). When Cain and Abel were of age, they approached God with offerings (Genesis 4:3-4). These facts imply that Adam and Eve had built into their home a reverence for—and fellowship with—God.

The home is humanity's primary center for religious and moral instruction, hence the inspired dictate: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of

the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). It is a tragedy of mammoth proportions that modern families have abdicated this role to the school and church. Both these institutions have their functions to perform, but God never assigned to them the work of the home (cf. 1 Timothy 5:8).

Moses set forth a wonderful example of the home's spiritual environment when he said: "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates" (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Logically, parents who practice this are more likely to see their children convert to Christ than are those who expect the church to be the sole source of spiritual training.

The state of the nation is a reflection of the state of its homes (cf. Proverbs 14:34). The homes that are built according to the divine pattern will serve as the backbone of our nation. Because of weak and dysfunctional homes, the church is hindered in her task. But, from solidly built Christian homes, the church can draw a mighty army to overcome the forces of darkness and proclaim the Gospel of the triumphant Christ to the world (cf. Psalm 9:17). Therein lies hope for our nation.

Loved ones, may your focus this day NOT be on creating an image so that other people are pleased or think well of you, but on cleansing your heart so that God will be pleased and think well of you (cf. Matthew 25:20-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; 2 Timothy 2:4). The God of Heaven is so Good. We love you all so much.

# Salvation

## Is Baptism Essential to Salvation?

By B.C. Carr

Our assignment is to show from the Bible that baptism is essential or necessary to salvation. By essential, we mean that it is so necessary that a responsible person cannot be saved without it. By salvation, we mean that one cannot be saved or pardoned from his past sins, hence, justified in the sight of God without baptism. This would also suggest that one would be eternally lost if he has not submitted to this commandment of the Lord.

We have been especially asked to contrast Baptist doctrine with Truth. In so doing, we shall try to be fair, yet unyielding so far as truth is concerned. We have many good friends in the Baptist church and do not wish to offend them, but God's Word must be true if it means every man is found to be a liar (Rom. 3:4).

### **Baptist Doctrine on Baptism**

Baptist doctrine teaches that Baptism is not essential to salvation. They affirm that one is saved before he is baptized. This is not to say they do not believe in baptism, for they do. They practice baptism. One cannot get into the Baptist church without being baptized. Baptist doctrine refutes sprinkling as practiced by Methodists and others. You see, the point of contention is not whether they believe in baptism, but do they think it is something to be done as a condition of salvation. They do not believe it has anything to do with salvation, but something that those who are saved should do to get into the Baptist church. It is to be compared to the Lord's Supper, something one observes after being saved. From *McConnell's Manual for Baptist Churches*, I quote the following from the chapter on "Distinctive Baptist Beliefs."

There were two ordinances in New Testament churches. They are Baptism and the Lord's

Supper. Baptists observe them in their churches. They, like all the ordinances of the Old Testament, are symbolical and teach by the manner of their administration. They are declarative and not procurative. All the baptisms of all ages of the world could not blot out the least sin.<sup>1</sup>

Ben Bogard was the greatest Baptist debater of the 20th century. In 1938, he debated N. B. Hardeman on the subject of "The Necessity of Baptism."<sup>2</sup> Over and over, Bogard denied that baptism was necessary for salvation. There is no doubt about what Baptist doctrine teaches. Baptists believe and teach that a man is saved at the point of faith (before he is baptized). Again, we quote from the Baptist manual on the subject of "Justification": "We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any work of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood."<sup>3</sup> This is simply saying one is saved by faith only.

### **Baptist Doctrine Versus Truth**

#### **Baptist Doctrine**

All the Baptisms of all ages could not blot out the least sin (Manual).

Baptism does not save anybody.

He that believes is saved without baptism and then should be baptized.

Man is saved by faith only.

Man is saved at the point of faith.

#### **Truth**

"arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16).





“baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21).

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jam. 2:24).

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble” (Jam. 2:19).

Again, Baptist debater Ben Bogard makes it clear as to what they believe as he debated Curtis Porter: “We teach that salvation is obtained at the point of faith, Acts 16:30-31,” and, “Salvation is at the point of faith.”<sup>4</sup>

The above stated positions concerning what Baptists believe on baptism are consistent with my experiences in discussions with them over the last fifty years. Several years ago, I conducted a radio debate with a Baptist preacher on this subject. It lasted for several weeks and attracted many listeners. This man insisted that baptism had nothing to do with salvation. In fact, he said, “There is not one thing a man can do to save himself.” One of our listeners, who was an invalid, listened every day. He was persuaded that he was lost since he had never been baptized. He asked his family to contact me to come to see him. He wanted to be baptized. Since members of his family belonged to the Baptist church, they called the Baptist preacher who was my opponent in the debate. When he arrived, he assured this man he was already saved since he was a believer, hence no need to be baptized. In a few days, this man died. It was then that I was told about this man's desire to talk with me and that he wanted to be baptized. His funeral was conducted from the Baptist church. I went to hear what my opponent would say. He related the story just as I had heard it. He said in his oration that he had assured this man he was saved, without baptism, and had caused him to die satisfied. What a pity. It is sad to know that many yet living are

being deceived in a similar way.


Surely, our readers can see that there is a contrast in each of the above statements. They cannot both be right. Please take your pen and mark through the one that is fake. You will be your own judge as to who is teaching the truth.

### **Consequences of Baptist Doctrine on Baptism**

If one accepts the doctrine that baptism is not essential to salvation, he must be prepared to accept other things that are obviously false. Please note the following:

1. If baptism is not essential to salvation, neither is belief. In Mark 16:16, faith and baptism are joined together as conditions of salvation.
2. If baptism is not essential to forgiveness of sins, neither is repentance. They are joined by the conjunction “and” and are of equal force (Acts 2:38). They are both for the same purpose.
3. If one is saved by faith only, then devils will be saved (Jam. 2:19).
4. If people can be saved by faith only, some of the chief rulers were saved who refused to confess Jesus (John 12:42).
5. If one can be saved without being baptized, he can be saved without obeying the commandments of God. Baptism is commanded (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:48).
6. If one does not keep the commandments, he does not know God (1 John 2:3).
7. If one does not keep the Lord's commandments, he cannot be a friend of God (John 15:14).
8. Only those who do the commandments can enter heaven (Rev. 22:14).
9. If one can be saved without baptism, he can be saved without the benefit of the death of Christ. We are baptized into his death (Rom. 6:4).
10. If one can be saved without being baptized, he can





be saved outside of Christ. Baptism is the final act that puts us into Christ.

But, please note the consequences of not being in Christ:

1. Only those in Christ are new creatures (2 Cor. 5:17).
2. All spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3).
3. Salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). Since one must be baptized to get into Christ (Gal. 3:27) and there is no other way to enter Him, those who have never been baptized cannot be new creatures. They are without one single spiritual blessing.
4. They are without salvation. We must therefore conclude that they are lost.

#### Endnotes

1 *McConnell's Manual for Baptist Churches*, F. M. McConnell, Judson Press, 1946, p. 48.

2 *Hardeman-Bogard Debate*, Gospel Advocate Co., 1938 p. 157.

3 *Manual*, p. 18.

4 *Porter-Bogard Debate*, Roy Cogdill Pub. Co., Lufkin, TX., 1948, pp. 54, 73.

## THE BIBLE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

One hundred and fifty years ago, in 1844, the Supreme Court upheld a law which stated that all public schools across American were obligated to teach the Bible in order to receive public funding. Can you imagine that? In order for schools to get money from the government, they had to present the Bible as the inspired word of God! If you are a history buff, this would not surprise you because the founding fathers of our country were all Bible-believing men. Many of America's early state constitutions demanded that their public officials profess they believed in God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Many of the founding

fathers' writings were filled with Bible quotes and the early grade school teachers, called primers, were will with moral lessons and quotations of Scripture. IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT 94% of the laws in the Constitution and Bill of Rights were established from governmental type laws found in the Old and New Testaments.

What has happened in the last 150 years? The greatest changes have taken place in the last 35 years. In the early 1960s, our government began to reverse its trend of Bible teaching in public schools due to increasing pressure from various atheist or humanistic groups. While we blame special secularized interest groups for running the Bible's teaching out of schools, it's interesting to see the decline of morals and ethics in society running parallel with today's secularized public education.

The real blame for the breakdown of God's Word in public schools belongs on the backs of Americans who have removed the need of the Bible in their homes. Fewer and fewer people are reading, studying and applying God's principles taught in the Bible than ever before in our country. While our government continues to pervert the doctrine called "separation of church and state," most "religious" people in our nation seek churches which fulfill their selfish, physical wants and pleasures without regard to God's instruction demanded in the bible for righteous living.

The Proverbs writer said, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Many churches in the 90's are crying for Americans to be tolerant of immoral behavior while that behavior, or sin, is gradually destroying our nations. Sinful activities like abortion, homosexuality, divorce for any cause, gambling, social drinking, etc.,

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# QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

## Question

Did God know that Adam and Eve would sin by eating of the forbidden fruit when He placed them in the Garden of Eden?

## Answer

Yes. God knew that Adam and Eve would sin. Let us look at the Bible to justify this answer that has just been given.

The Bible teaches that God had a plan or purpose to save man even before the foundation of the world. In Ephesians 1:3-4, we read: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,”*

Also, in Titus 1:1-2, the Bible tells us that the hope of eternal life was promised before the world began: *“Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,”*

Speaking of Christ, the Bible says in I Peter 1:20 that *“He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”*

These passages prove very clearly that there was already a plan by God **before the foundation of the world** to save man. This plan or purpose of God is called the eternal purpose (Ephesians 3:10-11). We know that the world was made before Adam and Eve was made (Genesis 1:1) and since God had a plan of salvation before He created the world, then the logical conclusion from there is that God knew that man would sin even before He made man and placed him in the garden. In addition, God is omniscient (Psalm

139:1-6) and He knows the future (Isaiah 46:10). Since these are parts of the attributes of God, then it means that God knew that Adam and Eve would sin even before they were made and placed in the Garden of Eden.

- Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba

## IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO CORRECT A WRONG

After completing the work to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem, the people gathered together to listen as the book of the law was read to them (Nehemiah 8:1-3). On the next day, the heads of the households came to Ezra, the scribe, in order to *“gain insight into the words of the law”* (Nehemiah 8:13).

Upon closer examination, they learned about the command to *“live in booths during the feast of the seventh month”* (Nehemiah 8:14; Leviticus 23:34, 40-42). Yet the people *“had indeed not done so from the days of Joshua the son of Nun to that day”* (Nehemiah 8:17).

Generations had passed since the people observed this command. It would have been easy to disregard this because they had neglected it for so long. Yet after learning of their obligation to observe this feast by living in booths for seven days, they *“circulated a proclamation in all their cities and in Jerusalem,”* calling for all of the people to take part in this. The people did so, and *“there was great rejoicing”* among them (Nehemiah 8:15-17).

So remember that it is never too late to correct a wrong. No matter how much time has passed, we always have the option to do what is right. Let us not allow our previous failings to prevent us from making whatever changes we need to make in our lives.

-Andy Sochor



# Addendum

## Apostles and Prophets In The New Testament Church: Qualifications, Appointment, Functions, and Duration

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

*“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” (Ephesians 4:11-12)*

As far as the organization of the New Testament church is concerned, apostles and prophets were part of those that God set forth in the church during the infancy stage of the church. Paul stated in Ephesians 2:20 that the church was built upon the *“foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.”* Apostles and prophets were set there for a specific purpose, and when their mission was accomplished, they are no longer needed today (I Corinthians 13:8).

However, it is not uncommon to see people today in the religious world call themselves apostles and prophets. In fact, some individuals and churches would not consider one a true Christian if such does not possess the gift of prophecy. As part of our duty to rightly divide the word of truth (II Timothy 2:15), our endeavor in this writing is to examine the role of apostles and prophets; their qualifications, how they were appointed as well as the duration of their work.

### Definition of Terms

The word “apostle” is from the Greek word *“Apostolos”* (G652), and it means a messenger; someone that is sent from or forth. In the New Testament, we find that the word is used in two distinct senses. Generally, it could refer to anyone that is sent by another to fulfill a task or mission. For example, we find that the word “messengers” in II Corinthians 8:23 is a translation of the Greek word, *“Apostolos”* – *“If anyone inquires about Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are*

*messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ”* (II Corinthians 8:23). The word translated “messengers” in this verse is *“Apostolos”* and the brethren were called apostles in the sense that they were sent by the churches on a mission. Another good example is found in Acts 14:14, where Barnabas (alongside Paul) was called an apostle. Here, Barnabas was an apostle in the sense that he was sent by the church in Antioch of Syria and accompanied Paul on evangelistic trips.

In a special or official sense, the term “apostle” also refers to those individuals who were specially and divinely selected to serve as Jesus' original representatives or messengers – *“And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom **He also named apostles:**”* (Luke 6:13). Jesus chose these men as special messengers or ambassadors (II Corinthians 5:20). Of these original twelve, we find that Judas betrayed the Lord and committed suicide (Matthew 27:3-5). Matthias was selected by divine appointment to replace Judas (Acts 1:16-26). Paul was another man chosen by divine appointment to serve as the apostle of the Lord (I Corinthians 1:1; 9:1-4; Galatians 1:1).

Prophets on the other hand were people who spoke for God. They receive revelations from God and speak what God has revealed to them. Agabus was an example of such (Acts 11:27-30). In the church that was at Antioch, we find that there were certain prophets there (Acts 13:1). There were also prophets in the church at Corinth (I Corinthians 14:29). When people were baptized in the New Testament,





we find that the apostles often lay hands on them to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17) and they would receive the miraculous ability to prophesy, speak in tongues, etc.

*“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”*

### **Qualifications**

Becoming an apostle in the official sense of it requires one to meet certain qualifications. Christ appointed the first set of men by handpicking them as seen in Luke 6:13. However, in replacement of Judas, Matthias was appointed by divine qualifications. These qualifications were set forth in Acts 1:21-22 when Judas was to be replaced: *“Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”*

From this verse, we see that for one to be qualified to be an apostle, such had to have seen the Lord and been an eyewitness of His resurrection. That was the basis on which Judas was replaced.

### **Functions**

The apostles specifically described their unique role in the early church as involving giving themselves to “the word of God” and “the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:2,4). Basically, apostles were commissioned by Jesus to introduce the religion of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48). We can see this

coming to place by their preaching of the Gospel to the whole world (Colossians 1:23), and the establishment of the church of Christ (Acts 2). Second, apostles were largely responsible for making the New Testament available—first in oral form and, more specifically, in written form (1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 3:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:14; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:12-21; 3:15-16). These two central tasks are set forth clearly in the New Testament. That was why Paul said in Ephesians 2:20 that the church was built upon the *“foundation of the apostles and prophets.”* The Holy Spirit provided the apostles miraculous powers to confirm their testimony (Acts 4:33). And once all the information necessary to the promotion of the Christian religion was revealed to the early church (through oral means made possible by the distribution of the gifts), the church would have the means available to grow and mature in Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13). While prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers were part of this early development of Christianity (Ephesians 4:11), the office of an apostle was the primary means by which Christ accomplished the inauguration of His religion.

### **Duration**

Once the functions of the apostles and prophets were completed (i.e., introducing the church and making the New Testament available), the apostolic office faded from the scene along with the age of miracles. There are some Bible reasons why we do not have apostles today. First, their work has been completed. Second, no one today can meet the qualification that was listed to be an apostle – no one can serve as an eyewitness to Jesus. Third, all who were selected as apostles were chosen by Jesus. No method is recorded in the Bible for the training of new apostles. In fact,



Paul's argument that he was an apostle rested on the fact that he was not trained or selected by men (Galatians 1:11-12). Fourth, there is a distinct lack of proof that men today are apostles. There are signs with proved they are apostles. For example, Paul said to the Corinthians; *"Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds."* Where is the evidence of signs which prove apostleship today? A notable sign was the ability to pass on the gifts of the Spirit by the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:18). Paul even showed this ability (II Timothy 1:6). Today we have claims of such an ability, but there has been no proof. Hence, neither apostles nor miraculous gifts were needed any longer. They had served their temporary purpose (Mark 16:20; Acts 4:29-31; 13:12; 14:3; Romans 15:18-19; Hebrews 2:3-4; cf. Exodus 4:30). Miraculous gifts functioned as scaffolding while the church was under initial construction and was removed at the completion of the structure (1 Corinthians 3:10; 13:11; Ephesians 4:13-14). The Bible is the totality of God's written revelation to humans today and it is the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25). Consequently, people now have access to everything they need (2 Peter 1:3) in order to enter into a right relationship with God via Christianity and the church of Christ. The apostles "had no official successors. From the nature of their duties, there could be no succession" (Hayden, pp. 20-21 cited in Miller, 2002). Based on this, apostles, quite simply, are no longer needed!

### **Conclusion**

God warned us that there would be false apostles. Their deeds would demonstrate them to be false (II Corinthians 14:13-15). When tested, they would be shown as false apostles (Revelation 2:2). When a man falsely claims apostleship, he does so to gain authority

with the church. By claiming to be an apostle, he claims the right to teach his own doctrine and that doctrine will necessarily conflict with the proven doctrine already delivered by the apostles (Galatians 1:6-10). Hence, we are warned to test every spirit (I John 4:1). Just because a man claims to be an apostle does not make it so.

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## **THE BIBLE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

### **Continued from pg. 36**

are not only tolerated by many mainstream denominational groups, but supported in their teaching and fellowship. When you look in many of our public school libraries, you'll find all types of horror stories, witchcraft and occult type books, while the Bible is getting harder and harder to find.

Even though America appears to be on the brink of destruction due to its unrestrained lust and sin, there is hope for our country. James tells us in James 5:15 that "the effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" the prayers of God's children possess the power "to change the night to day." We should also let our lights shine in the midst of this perverse generation so others can see that good will triumph over evil. Dear brother or sister, are you doing your part?

by **Kenneth Sils**