



UNMASKING SOPHISTRY

A Journal of Christian Evidences and Comparative Religions

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

(Colossians 2:8, NASB)

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From The Editor's Desk

This is the 20th edition of Unmasking Sophistry Magazine published since its inception and it is the last issue published in 2025. We thank God for the strength to carry on the work. This journal is designed to teach the truth of God's Word as well as expose the various arguments that have been prepared in defense of false religion and arguments designed to oppose the Christian faith.

In the last edition of this journal, we examined various subjects under each of the sections such as *There is no true love without obedience; Why I left the Catholic Church; Was Peter the first Pope? Arguments against the Missionary Society; Holding fast the pattern of sound words; Our common salvation; Quibbles that Backfired;* and other interesting topics.

This edition shall focus on topics such as; *Speaking Where the Bible Speaks and Studying the History of Fallible Religious Leaders; Boldness in the Service of the Lord; Was Peter the first Pope?; The Church And Human Organizations; Irresistible Grace: How Are We Saved By Grace Through Faith? The Lord's Supper: More Than A Tradition; The Obvious Errors with Premillennialism; Proof for the inspiration of the Bible;* and other interesting topics.

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

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

We appreciate all the prayers, feedback, and encouragement from readers. We would continue to hold fast the pattern of sound words which we have heard from the apostles, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (II Timothy 1:13; Acts 2:42).

God's Love and Blessings.

Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba

Editor

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES

Proof for the Inspiration of the Bible

By Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

Text: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Many believe the Bible is an ancient book created by men. They reject the idea that it is from God. On the other hand, Christians believe the Bible contains the word of God given by inspiration. What proof do we have that the Bible is from God? We will consider a few points in this lesson.

The Bible's Claim of Inspiration

- It is important to notice this first – if it claims to be inspired but is not, we should ignore it; but if it claims to be inspired and is, then we must follow what it says
- Passages that affirm the inspiration of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16)

The Accuracy of the Bible

- Historical accuracy – events in the Bible can be corroborated with secular historians; Luke's record in Acts contains 32 countries, 54 cities, 9 islands, 95 persons (62 of which are not named elsewhere in the NT); all of these, when checkable, are always correct
- Archaeological evidence – discoveries are always being made, providing confirmation for what is in the Bible; example: the Hittites (Genesis 23:10-11); for years there was no archaeological evidence this people existed, but archaeological discoveries in Turkey have confirmed the existence of this ancient nation
- Consistency with science – the Bible is not a science textbook, but it harmonizes with true science; example: the paths of the sea (Psalm 8:8);

this led to the discovery of ocean currents by Matthew Maury (19th century); example: circumcision on the eighth day (Genesis 17:12); why? ... highest levels of vitamin K (helps with clotting) exist on the eighth day after birth

The Consistency of the Bible

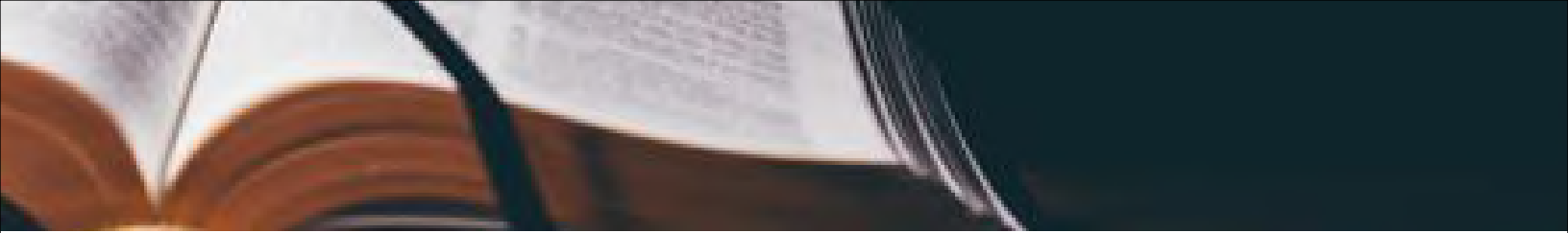
- Written by 40 authors with different backgrounds, levels of education, etc. – most never met one another; they wrote over a period of about 1500 years in three languages
- Despite this, there are no real contradictions – it harmonizes with itself (cf. John 10:35)

Fulfilled Prophecies in the Bible

This may be the most powerful proof for the inspiration of the Bible (John 14:29; Isaiah 46:9-10) – the Bible gives a test to see if a prophet spoke for God (Deuteronomy 18:20-22); if the Bible prophesied things that did not come to pass, we should ignore it; but its prophecies have been fulfilled

Prophecies about people in the Bible

- Sennacherib – conquered cities of Judah (2 Kings 18:13), but would not take Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:32-36); he boasted of shutting up Hezekiah “like a bird in a cage,” but never took the city.
- Ahab – Micaiah prophesied his death in battle (1 Kings 22:17, 28); Ahab even disguised himself (1 Kings 22:30), but was killed by a random arrow (1 Kings 22:34, 37)
- Cyrus – prophesied *by name* before the Babylonian captivity (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1); ruled over Persia, conquered Babylon, and allowed the Jews to return from exile (Ezra 1:1-3)



Prophecies about Jesus

- His birth was prophesied (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23), including its location (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1).
- Throughout His life, He did things “*to fulfill*” various prophecies (Matthew 2:23; 4:13-16; 13:34-35).
- Specific prophecies about His crucifixion (Psalm 22:7-18).

Relevancy of the Bible

- The Bible claims to be from God and reveals His will to man – He is our creator and knows what we need; He gave us a *timeless* message that is always applicable to our needs; never irrelevant.
- He has given us everything pertaining to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3) – not missing anything we need.
- He has equipped us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17) – nothing He forgot to tell us.
- He has given us the standard of judgment for the last day (John 12:48) – no need to be surprised.

Conclusion

- The Bible's claim of inspiration demands that we either accept it or reject it
- If it were from men, we would be free to ignore it
- But since it is from God, we must believe and obey it to have hope of eternal life (cf. Acts 20:32)

THE ENDS DO NOT JUSTIFY THE MEANS

When Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome, he addressed a misconception – that God's grace allowed them to continue in their sinful behavior (cf. Romans 6:1-2). In fact, some were claiming that the apostle Paul himself was teaching this message.

However, Paul made it very clear that he did not teach such a doctrine: “*Any why not say (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), ‘Let us do evil that good may come’? Their condemnation is just*” (Romans 3:8). Those who claimed that Paul taught the idea that doing *evil* was a legitimate way of bringing about something *good* were guilty of *slandering* the apostle. The concept was false and was not at all what Paul taught.

Sadly, many have this concept today. It has been referred to as “situation ethics,” and is the idea that the circumstances in which we find ourselves determine what is right or wrong at a given time. This has been used to justify *lying* in order to get ahead, *adultery* in order to leave one's spouse for someone else, *stealing* because of one's poverty, and much more.

However, Paul made it clear that those who “*do evil*” will be justly condemned by God. The Lord does not hold us to different standards based upon our situation. We should not try to justify sin – either our own or that of someone else – based upon certain circumstances.

So remember that the ends do not justify the means. If a particular practice is wrong, we must avoid it no matter the situation. Instead, we need to do what is right at all times.

Andy Sochor

World Religions

The Obvious Errors with Premillennialism

By Dylan Stewart | Alabama, USA

Revelation 20:4 reads, *"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."* Numerous denominations use this verse to teach that when Jesus returns for His second coming He will set up an earthly kingdom and reign 1,000 years on earth. This doctrine is known as premillennialism. [Surveys](#) show that at least 65% of Bible believers accept this doctrine as truth even though numerous passages prove it to be false, with two passages in particular making it abundantly clear the error in premillennialism.

1. Describing the second coming of Christ, Paul explains, *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). This passage teaches that when Christ returns He will not set foot on earth. Instead, the dead in Christ will rise from the graves, then those who are still alive will follow, and both will meet Jesus *"in the air."* How could Jesus return to establish a kingdom and reign on earth without ever setting foot on the earth?

2. 2 Peter 3:3-4, 10 also reads, *"Knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, 'Where is*

the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation'... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." This passage shows how when *"the day of the Lord"* (Jesus's second coming) occurs, the earth and everything in it will be burned up. How could Jesus possibly reign 1,000 years on earth when the earth has been destroyed?

In addition to falsely teaching that Jesus will return to earth to establish a physical kingdom, the premillennialists also contend Jesus's 1,000 year reign will begin at some point in the future. However, the Bible teaches that Christ's reign has already begun. Various passages illustrate this truth.

Describing the second coming of Christ, Paul explains, *"But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death"* (1 Corinthians 15:23-26). The premillennialists argue that the second coming of Christ and the end of the world are not the same events, but the Holy Spirit says otherwise in this passage. We can see clearly that the second coming of Christ and the end of the world are one and the same in 1 Corinthians 15:23-26. In that day, the resurrection will occur, then Christ will deliver His spiritual kingdom to God. But, if the



kingdom is not established before Christ's second coming like premillennialists say, then the consequence of that logic is that the kingdom will never be established, based on what this passage teaches in regards to the second coming and the end of the world being the same event. And, of course, if the kingdom is never established, how then could Jesus deliver something that does not exist over to God at the end of the world? Therefore, the obvious conclusion is that the kingdom is already in existence.

The very context of Revelation 19-20 makes it clear that Christ's kingdom has already been established. Revelation 19:6, for example, reads, "*And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!*'" Note that "*reigns*" (present-tense) and not "*will reign*" (future-tense) is used in this verse to indicate that the Lord's reign began in the first century. Additionally, Revelation 17:14 shows that Jesus is presently "*Lord of lords and King of kings.*" So, Jesus is King over His kingdom right now. Likewise, in the opening chapter of Revelation John describes himself as a "*brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ*" (1:9), showing that Christ's kingdom had already been established.

If we look at Acts 2:30-31, we can see the exact point in which Christ's reign over His kingdom (a spiritual and not physical kingdom [see John 18:36]) began. In this sermon, Peter, speaking of the fulfillment of David's prophecy concerning Christ, explains, "*Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke*

concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption." This passage clearly shows Jesus's reign began at his resurrection from the dead. Christ was raised from the dead "*to sit on his throne*" not at some point in the future, but during the first century.

We also learn in Colossians 1:13 that Christians were already being "*transferred*" into the "*kingdom of his beloved Son*" (ESV) during the first century. Acts 2 shows exactly what is meant by this transference: "*Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' . . . Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers . .*

*. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:38, 41-42, 46-47). To be transferred into the kingdom of Christ is to be added by God to the church through meeting the necessary requirements laid out in the New Testament. In other words, the church is the spiritual kingdom in which Christ currently reigns (see Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23-25; Colossians 1:18, 24). While the words "church" and "kingdom" are not always interchangeable in scripture, evidence that the church and the kingdom in which Christ reigns are one and the same is found in Matthew 16:18-19 where the Lord referred to the "*church*" and the "*kingdom of heaven*" synonymously. This spiritual kingdom - the church - is the same*



kingdom prophesied by Daniel in Daniel 2:44; 7:13-14 (consider also Hebrews 12:18-28).

Lastly, in Mark 9:1, Jesus declared, “*Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.*” As my grandad used to jokingly say, if Christ's kingdom has not come yet, we sure do have some old folks walking around this earth. So, could it be any more obvious that Jesus's kingdom in which He reigns has been in existence for roughly 2,000 years? If not, my grandad's joke was actually not a joke at all!

Conclusion

The errors with premillennialism are obvious. By rightly dividing God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15), we can see how Revelation 20:4 has nothing to do with a physical kingdom in which Jesus reigns for 1,000 years because when Christ returns again, it will be “*the end*” of this world (1 Corinthians 15:23-24), not the beginning of a 1,000 year reign on it. Christ's figurative 1,000 year reign began in the first century after His resurrection and with the establishment of the church. Members of the Lord's church are presently members of the kingdom of Christ. When Christ returns on the last day, He will transfer faithful members of His kingdom over to God to receive their eternal reward. The question must be raised then - are you in the kingdom?

THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR SIN

At the end of Romans 1, Paul catalogued the various sins of which the Gentiles were guilty – sins like homosexuality, murder, gossip, arrogance, and many more. For the Jewish brethren in his audience, this was likely met with hearty approval. When the sins of others are pointed out, that is often welcomed.

However, Paul did not stop there. As he turned his attention to his Jewish brethren in the church, he said that they “practice the same things” (Romans 2:1). His point was not that sin should be tolerated because “everybody sins.” He said in the next verse that “the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things” (Romans 2:2). We do not want to condone or justify a practice that God “rightly” condemns.

Paul explained that those who “practice such things” cannot expect to “escape the judgment of God” (Romans 2:3). While this is true of the godless, Paul was writing this letter to Christians – ones who should have already known this. This is why he said they had “no excuse” (Romans 2:1). They knew better, yet they still transgressed the law.

For those of us who are Christians, we know what God's will is because He has revealed it to us in His word. We can look to the Scriptures and see the difference between right and wrong. We have been told of God's judgment and the need to prepare for it.

So remember that there is no excuse for sin. God has told us what He expects of us. Rather than making excuses for failing to live up to His standard, we need to work on putting away sin from our lives.

Andy Sochor

DISCOURSE

The apostle Peter was the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church

Affirmative: John Martignoni | Bible Christian Society

Denial: Thomas N. Thrasher | Church of Christ

The topic for discussion in this section is a continuation of the issue which was started in the last two editions on whether or not Peter was the first Pope. John Martignoni affirms the proposition that "The apostle Peter was the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church" while Thomas N. Thrasher responds to the arguments. Martignoni's third affirmative and Thrasher's third negative are presented here. Subsequent affirmative and negative articles of both debaters will be published in the coming editions of Unmasking Sophistry. Previous editions of the magazine can be downloaded at www.unmaskingsophistry.com

Affirmative: John Martignoni | Bible Christian Society

Martignoni's Third Affirmative

Mr. Thrasher states he is giving me "problems" by "calling attention to what the **Scriptures teach.**" I actually have no problem with what the Scriptures teach. I have a problem, though, with Mr. Thrasher's private, fallible interpretation of what the Scriptures teach. And, more importantly, I have a problem with Mr. Thrasher's private, fallible interpretation of what the Scriptures don't teach. Most of his "scriptural" argument here is an argument from silence. The summation of his "scriptural" argument for Peter not being the first head of the Church is:

- 1) Nowhere does the Bible specifically say that Peter was the first head of the Church, therefore, Peter was not the first head of the Church. An argument from silence.
- 2) In Luke 22:24-26, the disciples argued as to which of them was the greatest, and Jesus could have said Peter was the greatest and settled the issue, but He didn't. So Jesus "missed a wonderful opportunity to identify Peter as the head of the church!" Therefore, Peter is not the first head of the Church. Another argument from silence.

That basically sums up his "scriptural" argument. Addressing the former point, nowhere does the Bible use the term "preaching elder." Yet, Pat Donahue, a member of Thrasher's Campbellite Church of Christ, was introduced to me as a "preaching elder." Which I suppose means that there are non-preaching elders as well. Mr. Thrasher, where does the Bible specifically identify the office of "preaching elder"? Yet, you have them.

The Campbellite Church of Christ has regular church meetings on Wednesday night. Nowhere in the Bible does it mention anything about church meetings on Wednesday night. Yet, you have them.

Nowhere in the Bible does it say, "Go forth and limit the number of your children by using contraception." Yet, contraception is an acceptable practice in the Campbellite Church of Christ.

God commands that He be worshipped and praised, on earth, using musical instruments (Ps 33:2-3). In Heaven, we see that musical instruments are involved



in the worship and praise of God (Rev 5:8). Yet, instruments are banned in the Campbellite churches.

The point being, Mr. Thrasher, that you have many beliefs and practices in your faith tradition that are not specifically mentioned in the Bible. So, to argue from silence that Peter cannot be the first head of the Church because nowhere does the Bible specifically “call Peter **Bishop of Rome, pope, or head of the church,**” smacks of hypocrisy.

Tell me where the Bible specifically mentions the offices of preaching and non-preaching elders, or that Christians should meet on Wednesday nights, or that Christians should use contraception, or that there is a prohibition against musical instruments in worship services, and I will concede your point. But, if you can't show me where those things are specifically stated in Scripture, then you will have conceded my point: that you believe in things that are not directly mentioned in Scripture and, therefore, this particular argument of yours regarding Peter is without merit.

On point two mentioned above, I would have to say that Mr. Thrasher is badly mistaken in claiming that “Jesus missed a wonderful opportunity to identify Peter as the head of the church!” This is one of those situations where one's private, fallible interpretation of the Bible can get one in trouble. Let's look at Lk 22:24-26, but let's also go a few verses farther and see if maybe Mr. Thrasher overlooked, or possibly intentionally ignored, a tiny little inconvenient detail.

In Luke 22:24-26, the disciples are arguing amongst themselves as to who should be considered the greatest. Mr. Thrasher seems to think that Jesus' silence in not naming Peter as the greatest is scriptural evidence that Peter was not the first head of the Church. Three things that Mr. Thrasher is either overlooking or intentionally ignoring:

1) Nowhere does it state that Peter was involved in this “dispute.” He may have been, but the Bible does not specifically say he was.

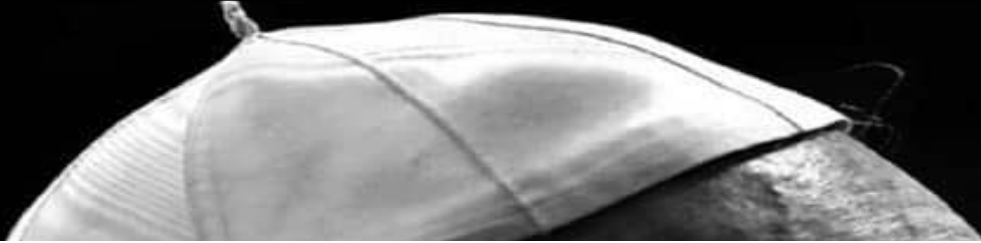
2) Jesus wasn't about “greatness” as the world saw it and as the disciples saw it at the time. So why on earth would He say, “Peter is the greatest among you?” Yet Mr. Thrasher claims Jesus' not saying that is scriptural proof that Peter was not the first head of the Church.

3) Jesus actually did settle their dispute as to which was the greatest among them. Mr. Thrasher, though, refuses to recognize what Scripture puts right in front of him.

There are several places in Scripture that mention how the disciples argued about who was the greatest and, when that happened, what did Jesus do? He responded by talking about humility (e.g., Mt 18:4), not about greatness. But, Jesus did indeed tell his disciples who the greatest among them was. He said, “He who is greatest among you shall be your servant,” (Mt 23:11). It just so happens that one of the main titles of the Pope is: Servant of the Servants of God. So, Jesus did indeed tell us, indirectly, who was “greatest” among them.

However, Jesus also tells us directly. In that very passage cited by Mr. Thrasher as proof that Peter was not the head of the Apostles, we see that Jesus did the exact opposite of what Mr. Thrasher claims. Jesus did indeed tell us that Peter was the greatest among them...if you read a few more verses. Luke 22:24-26 is where the Apostles were arguing about who was greatest among them. In verses 27-30, Jesus explains to them, again, that greatness consists in humility...in serving others...and that all of them will have a place at the table in His Kingdom, but then in verse 31, Jesus settles their argument.

Right after the Apostles are arguing about who is the



greatest, who, and who alone, does Jesus turn to and what name alone does Jesus mention? Simon Peter! So, Jesus did not miss “a wonderful opportunity to identify Peter as the head of the Church,” as Mr. Thrasher claims.

Right there, Mr. Thrasher, in verse 31, Jesus settles the dispute. “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you [plural - the Apostles], that he might sift you [plural - the Apostles] like wheat, but I have prayed for you [singular - Peter] that your faith may not fail; and when you [singular - Peter] have turned again, strengthen your brethren”

Jesus turns to Peter and says that He, Jesus, has prayed for who? All of the Apostles, since they are all equal? No! Jesus has prayed for Peter and for Peter's faith not to fail. Wow, Jesus missed a wonderful opportunity here to tell them that they were all equal. Jesus prays for Peter so that Peter can strengthen the other Apostles. I guess that means Bartholomew was the greatest among them? Or James? Or John? Or Jude? No! Mr. Thrasher's biased, and very fallible, interpretation of Scripture is on display here. Jesus did not miss an opportunity to identify Peter as the head of the Apostles and thereby the head of the Church. Jesus ends the dispute by singling out Peter. By clearly identifying Simon Peter as having a special role among the Apostles. Never, after that instance, do the Apostles argue that topic again.

Any other Scripture verses that affirm this? Well, there is the time Jesus appointed Peter to be shepherd of His flock (John 21:15-17). Was any other Apostle told by Jesus to feed His lambs, tend His sheep, and feed His sheep? No! Mr. Thrasher's response to that Scripture verse, which clearly shows Jesus appointing Peter as shepherd of His flock, was to say, “Well, there are a couple of other places in Scripture where someone is

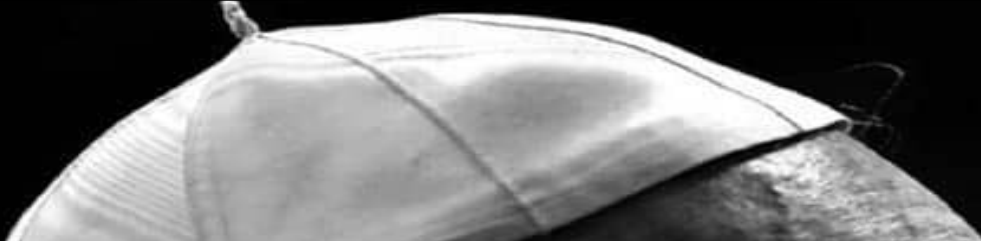
told to feed the flock, does that mean they were the Pope?” In other words, his response was a non-response. He never addressed John 21:15-17 directly. If Jesus was not appointing Peter shepherd of His flock, then please, Mr. Thrasher, let us know what He was doing there?

As I showed previously, every time someone is told to feed the flock or the sheep, it is obvious that they have authority over that flock, as is the case with any local bishop. In John 21, Jesus is telling Peter to tend and feed His sheep, which means Jesus is giving Peter authority over His flock - His entire flock.

Want more? Another Scripture passage I've already mentioned - Matt 16:16-19. Here Jesus gives Peter the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. Was any other Apostle given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven, Mr. Thrasher? No. So, will you admit that this was unique to Peter?

And, as I mentioned in my first affirmative, the language Jesus uses in Matt 16:16-19, is almost identical to the language used by God in Isaiah 22:19-22. Mr. Thrasher has completely ignored that in his responses thus far. In Isaiah 22, the Prime Minister of the Davidic Kingdom, Shebna, is being told by God that his office will be filled by another, Eliakim. And it is said that Shebna has authority over the household - the house of Judah...the house of David. How is this authority signified? By the “key” of the house of David.

In Mr. Thrasher's private, fallible interpretation of Matt 16:19, Peter being given the keys to the kingdom “*refers to Peter's role in being the first to preach to the Jews (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10).*” Does Mr. Thrasher thereby wish to contend that Eliakim being given the key to the kingdom signifies that Eliakim will be the first to preach the Jews and the Gentiles? I



doubt it. Which means Mr. Thrasher's interpretation of Matt 16:19 is dubious, at best. No, being given the keys to the kingdom signifies being given authority. The authority of the king to act in the king's stead.

What else does Isaiah 22 mention? It speaks of opening and shutting (binding and loosing). It also speaks of an "office" that is held by Shebna. What office? Well, Shebna was, again, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom. So, Isaiah uses the language of the keys, and opening and shutting, in connection with the highest office in the kingdom, after the king himself. And Jesus uses this very same language when speaking to Peter. This couldn't possibly mean that there was any connection to Peter holding the highest office in the kingdom, after the King Himself, could it? Anyone who cannot see the connection has scales on their eyes.

Finally, let's look at the **remarkable** admission Mr. Thrasher made in response to my question about who wrote the Gospel of Mark. He said he doesn't know!!! "All that matters to me is that God is the source," and he cites 2 Tim 3:16-17, Eph 3:3-5, and 1 Cor 2:10 to prove that God is the source of the Gospel of Mark. I'm confused by his references, though, as not a single one of them says anything about the Gospel of Mark, or its author. Mr. Thrasher, if you don't know who wrote it, how do you know "God is the source?" Explain.

His "scriptural" argument against Peter being the first head of the Church is that the Bible nowhere specifically states Peter was, "the Bishop of Rome, pope, or head of the church." But, he believes Mark is inspired by God, yet nowhere does the Bible specifically say so. How do you know it is, Mr. Thrasher? Who told you if not the Bible?

Give me book, chapter, and verse where the Bible states, "God is the source," of the Gospel of Mark. You

can't, so I ask you to concede that the argument regarding the Bible never saying, "Peter was the Pope," is specious and concede that I have won that point. If the Bible never specifically stating Peter was, "Bishop of Rome, pope, or head of the church," proves in your mind that he was not, then the Bible never specifically stating that "God is the source of the Gospel of Mark," proves that He was not.

THE BLAME GAME

We have all heard the expression "*The Blame Game*" in a variety of ways and in numerous settings. A common practice of our society is what we may call "*absolution of accountability*." Simply put, everything under the sun, regardless of how outrageous it may be, is used to excuse or explain away our actions. We pass on blame at the drop of a hat and shed personal accountability like water of a duck's back! In most cases the assignment of blame is the absolution of self and the promotion of self as being right. We can neatly wipe our hands clean and say: "*I didn't do it, and if I did, it's not my fault.*"

I read a good summary of "*blame*." Blame never affirms; it always assaults. Blame never solves; it always complicates. Blame never unites; it always separates. Blame never smiles; it always frowns. Blame never forgives; it always accuses and rejects. Blame never forgets; it always remembers. Blame never builds; it always destroys. How true!

The real need is to focus on our part of the problem and not the other person's faults, and very importantly, accepting responsibility for our problems and not absolving ourselves from accountability.

Continued on pg. 17

DISCOURSE

The apostle Peter was the first Pope of the Roman Catholic Church

Denial: Thomas N. Thrasher | Church of Christ

Thrasher's Third Negative

Once more I am blessed to participate in this discussion with my friend, John Martignoni.

Not only do he and I share weighty responsibility for our contributions to this debate, but our readers are also accountable to God for their responses (Luke 8:18; Acts 17:11).

My opponent claims, "Most of his [Thrasher's] 'scriptural' argument ... is an argument from silence." Suppose John ordered a lawnmower costing \$250 from Sears. However, when his order arrived, Sears had shipped the lawnmower, a boat, and a refrigerator, charging John \$5000. When John complained, Sears argued, "You didn't say **not** to ship a boat and refrigerator!" I suspect John might argue that he hadn't ordered those other items, and Sears was **not authorized** to add items to his order. Surely, every reader of this debate understands that principle.

However, it is unfortunate that John seems to have so little respect for God's word that he fails to recognize the importance of **respecting the "silence" of the Scriptures!** God warned, "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone **adds** to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18). God cautioned, "Every word of God is pure;... **Do not add** to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6). God charged, "You **shall not add** to the word which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). Furthermore, "Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you **shall not add** to it" (Deuteronomy 12:32). God killed Nadab and Abihu because they did that which God "had **not**

commanded them" (Leviticus 10:1). John declared, "Whoever transgresses and **does not abide** in the doctrine of Christ **does not have God**" (2 John 9). Peter wrote, "If anyone speaks, let him speak **as the oracles of God**" (1 Peter 4:11). God expects us to respect His silence.

The writer of Hebrews made an argument based upon the principle that silence does **not** authorize, **silence prohibits**: "For He [Jesus] of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses **spoke nothing** concerning priesthood" (Hebrews 7:13-14). The point is that Jesus could not have been a priest under the Old Law, because Moses "**spoke nothing**" (God's word was **silent!**) about priests from the tribe of Judah! Evidently, John rejects the argument from the "silence" of the Scriptures. In so doing, he rejects the Holy Spirit's argument!

I have repeatedly asked where the Scriptures refer to Peter's being Bishop of Rome, Head of the Church, or Pope. John knows the Scriptures **nowhere** mention these ideas. However, instead of respecting the **silence** of the Scriptures, he attacks me for insisting that we should **not add** to God's word (Revelation 22:18; Proverbs 30:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32), but "speak **as the oracles of God**" (1 Peter 4:11).

John states: "Nowhere does the Bible use the term 'preaching elder.' Yet, Pat Donahue...was introduced to me as a 'preaching elder.'" Pat told me he thinks John is mistaken. Regardless, Pat rejects being called that, for he is not an "elder" at all! The Bible mentions



elders (1 Peter 5:1; Acts 20:17), but it **never** mentions Archbishops, Cardinals, or Popes!

My opponent said, “The Campbellite Church of Christ has regular church meetings on Wednesday night.” Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). Wouldn't that include any time—even *Wednesday night*? Early Christians were involved **daily** in “teaching and preaching Jesus” (Acts 5:42).

John states, “Instruments are banned in the Campbellite churches.” Sadly, although my friend has previously admitted that “Campbellism” is a **digression** from our topic, he seems unwilling to refrain from insulting epithets. Tactics such as name-calling and insults are frequently employed as a subterfuge when one does not have Bible authority for his practices! Interestingly, John ignored my offer to discuss “Campbellism” when this debate has concluded.

John said, “Tell me where...there is a prohibition against musical instruments in worship services, and I will concede your point.” The use of instrumental music in New Testament worship is **prohibited** because it is an **addition**! “Whoever transgresses and **does not abide in the doctrine of Christ** does not have God” (2 John 9). God destroyed people who did that “which He had **not commanded** them” (Leviticus 10:1), and God warns **not to add** to His word (Revelation 22:18; Proverbs 30:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32).

Christians are taught to **sing** in worship to God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Acts 16:25). We are **never authorized** to use instruments of music (pianos, organs, guitars, etc.) in **New Testament worship**. If John honestly thinks we are, perhaps he

will put that on our growing list of debate topics!

My opponent stated concerning Luke 22:24-26, “Mr. Thrasher seems to think that Jesus' silence in not naming Peter as the greatest is scriptural evidence that Peter was not the first head of the Church.” My point was that Jesus could have easily settled the issue by saying, “Peter is the greatest,” but He didn't!

John objected, “Nowhere does it state that Peter was involved in this 'dispute.’” However, whether or not Peter was *involved* is irrelevant to the point, although John admitted Peter may have been. Regardless who was disputing, Jesus could have said, “Peter is the greatest,” if that were true.

John said, “Jesus did indeed tell his disciples who the greatest among them was”—Peter.

However, his conclusion contradicts the very point Jesus made: “Those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But **not so among you**” (Luke 22:25)!

John alleges, “Jesus did indeed tell us that Peter was the greatest among them” when He said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). Dear reader, does that verse say anything about Peter being the greatest?

John adds, “Jesus prayed for Peter.” Is that evidence that Peter was the greatest? Perhaps it was because Peter was going to deny the Lord three times and would need restoring. However, Jesus also prayed for His other disciples: “I pray for **them**” (John 17:9).

My friend argues that Jesus told Peter to “strengthen your brethren”; therefore, Jesus was selecting Peter to be Pope. However,

Paul and his company “returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, **strengthening** the souls of the disciples” (Acts 14:21-22). Does the fact that they



strengthened disciples make them Pope?

· “Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and **strengthened** the brethren” (Acts 15:32). Were Judas and Silas Popes?

· Paul “went through Syria and Cilicia, **strengthening** the churches” (Acts 15:41) and he “went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, **strengthening** all the disciples” (Acts 18:23). Was Paul Pope?

John refers to Shebna (Isaiah 22) as “Prime Minister of the Davidic Kingdom.” However, Shebna is called “steward” (Isaiah 22:15, NKJV, NASB, NIV, ESV) or “treasurer” (KJV, ASV), not Prime Minister. He did not occupy a position such as the Pope does.

John asked, “Does Mr. Thrasher thereby wish to contend that Eliakim being given the key to the kingdom signifies that Eliakim will be the first to preach the Jews and the Gentiles?” Obviously not! Does John think that “Eliakim being given the key” signifies that Eliakim was *Pope*?

John says I believe the book of “Mark is inspired by God, yet nowhere does the Bible specifically say so.”

§ God **revealed** His word: “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

§ God **completely** revealed His word: “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into **all truth**” (John 16:13).

§ God's word was **written**: “How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly **written** already, by which, when you **read**, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)” (Ephesians 3:3-4); “What you see, **write** in a book” (Revelation 1:11); “**Write** the things which you have seen, the things which are, and the things which will take place after this” (Revelation 1:19); “The things

which I **write** to you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37); “I now **write** to you this second epistle” (2 Peter 3:1); and many other passages.

§ God promised to **preserve** His word: “The word of the Lord **endures forever**” (1 Peter 1:25); “My words will by no means **pass away**” (Matthew 24:35). I trust God as revelator and **preserver** of His word—**all of it!** However, He was/is under no obligation to reveal the names of human writers, either of Mark or any other inspired book. The fact that God didn't reveal certain information demonstrates that information wasn't vital for us to know. God “has given to us **all things** that pertain to **life** and **godliness**” (2 Peter 1:3). Knowing for certain who wrote the book of Mark evidently does not “pertain to life and godliness”!

John asserts that my “argument against Peter being the first head of the Church is that the Bible **nowhere specifically states** Peter was, ‘the Bishop of Rome, pope, or head of the church.’” However, that is only one of many arguments. For example,

· According to the Bible, Jesus is the **only** Head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:19).

· Peter did not have authority over other apostles. Paul wrote, “In **nothing** was I behind the most eminent apostles” (2 Corinthians 12:11); “I am **not at all inferior** to the most eminent apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5).

· Jesus condemned exalting one disciple above others: “But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and **you are all brethren**” (Matthew 23:8).

· Peter referred to himself as a *fellow elder*: “The **elders** who are among you I exhort, I who am a **fellow elder** ... shepherd the flock of God which is **among you**, serving as overseers, ... and when the **Chief Shepherd**



appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (1 Peter 5:1-4). Peter did not claim preeminence over other elders. He declared that the oversight of elders is limited to the local church. He called Jesus (not Peter) the Chief Shepherd.

- Peter's name was not mentioned first in several passages (Galatians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 1:12; 3:22; 9:5).

- The power to “bind and loose” was given to all the apostles (Matthew 18:18).

- The **12 apostles** were (in some sense) to “sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

- Peter did **not accept reverence** from men (Acts 10:25-26).

- The Bible provides no indication that Peter accepted titles such as Pope, Vicar of Christ, Bishop of Rome, Head of the Church (cf. 1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1).

- Peter did not speak of being Pope or having any papal successors.

- Peter was a married man (1 Corinthians 9:5; Matthew 8:14).

- Peter never celebrated mass, never heard confessions, never directed anyone to pray to Mary or the saints, never advocated the use of holy water, never ordered people to abstain from meat on Fridays or during Lent, never taught that priests and nuns should not marry, never presented his foot to be kissed, and never lived in a palace with soldiers to guard him and numerous servants to supply his wants. He didn't do these things and many others ... because he was **never Pope!**

My friend has mentioned repeatedly my “private, fallible interpretation.” John, what about **your** numerous interpretations—are they fallible or

infallible? If fallible, does that mean you are wrong?

Dear reader, if my opponent could produce one **verse of Scripture** demonstrating that Peter was **Head of the Church** or **Pope**, that verse would settle the dispute! We are still waiting.

THE BLAME GAME

Continued from pg. 13

The common tendency is to say: *“It's everybody's fault but mine. They are just doing this to me because they...and then a whole litany of charges is leveled.”* But our real need is to realize and to say: *“I am wrong. I have sinned. I have committed this iniquity. I am guilty and I am the problem.”* This is the only way to bring about a change and improvement in our life. Henry Cloud said: *“Blame is the parking brake for improvement!”*

To accomplish this is to look inward at self and not outward at others. This requires a humble attitude (1 Pet. 5: 6; Jas. 4: 10). This humility starts with our attitude and standing before God. We can never be exalted and lifted up if we play the “Blame Game.”

If you are not a Christian, don't blame others or circumstances or God for your neglect. *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?”* (Heb. 2: 3). If your life is not in order obey God today. Believe in Christ, repent of your sins, confess Christ as the Son of God and be baptized for the remission of your sins (Mk. 16: 16; Rom. 10: 9-10; Acts 8: 37; Acts 2: 38). Think on these things.

Dennis Abernathy

QUIBBLES THAT BACKFIRED

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

In 1948, Curtis Porter met G. E. Cobb, a Baptist preacher, in Wooster, Arkansas. In discussing the building of the church, or the time of the church's establishment, Cobb started out on his affirmation on Isaiah 28:16, in which the Lord said, "I will lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation. " He went then to Mark the first chapter, verses 14 through 18, where the Lord at the sea of Galilee called Peter, Andrew, James and John to become his followers, and said there is where the Lord's church began, there is where it was set up." Porter said, "Mr. Cobb, upon the basis of your argument you have the foundation laid in Zion, and the church built in Galilee. The church was not even built where the foundation was laid. The foundation laid in one place, and the church built in another. Cobb came back to try to fix that thing up and he said, "the word Zion does not mean Jerusalem there. The word Zion means the church," trying to get out of the idea that one was in Jerusalem and the other in Galilee, to try to get them together. So he said the word Zion does not refer to Jerusalem there, it refers to the church. Alright, God said, through Isaiah, "I will lay the foundation in the CHURCH." And so the church was not built on the foundation, the foundation was laid in the CHURCH.

taken the keys away from the devil and the devil has no way of opening hell and let them in. In response, brother Curtis Porter said, "I wonder how he will get his own in? The Lord has hell locked up and has the keys and the devil cannot open it. How is he going to get his own children in? If he happens some way to get the doors open so that children of the devil can get in, may be some of the others can too."

In a debate with W. Curtis Porter in Southwest Missouri, in 1932, concerning the topic of baptism for the remission of sins, or as a condition of salvation, Mr. C. A. Smith (a Baptist) said that according to Porter's position, you measure the distance to Christ by the tapeline. He said, "Show me how far it is to the creek, and I'll show you how far it is to Christ. The man who lives nearest to the creek, lives nearest to Christ." And Porter showed that upon the basis of that we could measure the distance to the Baptist church with a tapeline. Show me how far it is to the creek, and I'll show you how far it is to the Baptist church. And the man who lives nearest to the creek lives nearest to the Baptist church. It works as well in one case as it does in the other.

Mr. Sherrill, in Broseley, Missouri, upon the subject of apostasy, said that God's children cannot go to hell because in Revelation 1:18 we are told that Jesus has the keys of hell and of death. Therefore the Lord has

Church History

Speaking Where the Bible Speaks and Studying the History of Fallible Religious Leaders

By Andy Sochor | Kentucky, USA

Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) was one of the leading figures of the Restoration Movement, which began in the United States in the 19th century. He, along with men like Alexander Campbell (his son), Barton W. Stone, and Walter Scott, sought to unite believers by abandoning the creeds and denominations of men. In a speech delivered in 1808, Thomas Campbell set forth an idea that became a motto for the movement.

“His voice was heard in Maple Groves where open air services were held. In due time it became evident that many of these hearers were in sympathy with Campbell's views. He proposed to some of the principal ones among them to have a meeting at some home to give more definite form to the movement. The House of Abraham Altars between Mt. Pleasant and Washington, Pennsylvania was chosen, and here, one of the most famous meetings of the restoration was held. Campbell's speech closed with the famous motto: 'Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent'” (*The Search for the Ancient Order: Volume 1*, p.47).

Campbell viewed the creeds of the denominations as the reason for the divisions that existed in the religious world. His statement – “Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent” – encapsulated the attitude that Christians ought to have toward the Scriptures that would necessarily lead them to reject the creeds and churches of men.

A Word of Caution

Before we go any further in this article (or subsequent ones), it is important to remember that whenever we study history like this, the men we are learning about

were just that – *men*. That means they were imperfect. They sometimes made poor decisions, arrived at faulty conclusions, or failed to reach the ideal they were aiming for in *restoring* the beliefs and practices we can read about in the New Testament. We can find ways in which each of these men fell short. One example is in the number who supported the missionary society (the issue we discussed in our previous article). With these faults and shortcomings, does that mean we cannot or should not study Restoration history (or other parts of religious history)?

No, there is no need to avoid studying this history. In fact, there is much good to be gained from it. However, learning about these men is not the same thing as learning what has been revealed for us in the Scriptures. There are some basic points we need to remember:

1. We are to observe and learn from others – Paul told the brethren in Philippi, “*Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us*” (Philippians 3:17). They were certainly to follow what Jesus and the apostles *taught*, but Paul also wanted them to take note of the *examples of others* who were following the Lord. The Hebrew writer said, “*Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith*” (Hebrews 13:7). They were to remember not just *what* they were taught, but *who* taught them so they could learn from their example. We can do this today with those who have taught us personally, as well as those from *previous generations* who labored to teach the word of God



and whose writings have been preserved for us today.

2. It is helpful to view things from a historical perspective – Each generation faces a new set of challenges and circumstances. There are some similarities between the world of men like Campbell and our world today, but there are also many differences. When it comes to what we are to do, we must do all things by the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:17) and make sure whatever we claim as an “expedient” first falls under the category of what is authorized (1 Corinthians 6:12). Often, traditions develop as a product of the conditions that existed in that day. If the traditions are authorized, they may have been expedient at the time they were implemented, but it is possible they may not be the best way to carry out the work today. Sometimes teaching is done in a way that places particular emphasis on refuting a currently prevalent error, which, even if the refutation is Biblical, could be misconstrued when applied to another issue later. The reason why it is important to recognize such things in their historical context is so that we might avoid elevating traditions and customs to the level of Scripture. It is essential that we know the difference between what God's word says and what men have said.

3. The Bible is our standard and the final authority – While it may be interesting, instructive, and helpful to read what men taught and wrote in the 19th century about what the Bible teaches, we need to always remember that they were not inspired. They wrote *about* Scripture; they were not revealing something new from the mind of God. Paul told Timothy, “*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in*

righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 1:13, NKJV). The words of Christ and His inspired men will be the standard by which we will be judged (John 12:48; Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 14:37). Therefore, the Bible must be our final authority in all religious matters.

4. We must follow Christ, not men – Paul rebuked the brethren in Corinth for the “*divisions among [them]*” (1 Corinthians 1:10) that came as a result of them following after men. “*Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.' Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*” (1 Corinthians 1:12-13). Even though Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (Peter) were faithful preachers of the gospel, the Corinthians were not to follow them. They could certainly learn from them and follow their example as they followed Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1), but they were to remember that they were to be disciples of Christ. In the same way, we must not think of ourselves as being “of Campbell,” “of Stone,” or “of” anyone else. Those who faithfully do the work of preaching the gospel will not be trying to draw people to themselves; instead, they will be pointing people to Christ. Paul wrote, “*For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake*” (2 Corinthians 4:5).

When we understand the points above, we can greatly benefit from the study of religious history, including the Restoration Movement.

What Does Scripture Teach?

The reason why Thomas Campbell's statement was a



fitting motto was not because of who said it, but because it articulated the proper approach toward Scripture that is commended to us in the word of God. Notice a few passages:

"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

"For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God" (Acts 20:27).

"But even 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! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!" (Galatians 1:8-9).

"Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God..." (1 Peter 4:11).

"Retain the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).

"Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).

"This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men" (Matthew 15:8-9).

The reason why we must strive to speak where the

Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent is not because Thomas Campbell came up with an idea that we like. We must do this because it is what the Lord expects of His people. We need to be content with His word as our only rule of faith and practice. We must teach and practice all that He has instructed and only what He has instructed in His word. If everyone who claimed to be a follower of Christ would diligently strive to do this, we could please the Lord and have unity with one another.

TRUTH DOES NOT CONTRADICT ITSELF

It is quite obvious to all my readers that Truth Does NOT Contradict Itself. No matter your age, your sex, your nationality or whatever, this is something we can agree on. In the same manner of thinking, all would agree that the sun shines in the day and the moon shines in the night. Those are matters of truth on which we have universal agreement.

Now, what about the Bible, God's Revelation to mankind? Is it all true? Are there any mistakes or false teaching in the Bible? Who, in their right minds, would claim such? Consider Christ's promise to the apostles as he is preparing them for the coming time when He will depart from the earth. *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come."* (John 16:13) We see this fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak to the multitudes gathered. *"And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance."* (Acts 2:4)

Can we agree that there is "one God? Various religions throughout the world may believe in many Gods, but the Word of God says there is only "one God: *"one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all."* (Ephesians 4:6)

- Jefferson David Tant

BARBS WITH A POINT

Boldness in the Service of the Lord

By Rowland Femi Gbamis | Tennessee, USA

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Introduction

The Word of God is unequivocally clear on boldness. Hence, the call to follow Christ is a call to bravery, which stands firm when everything else seeks to make us tremble and retreat. In the grand and glorious calling to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, there are many prerequisites for faithfulness, such as faith, love, humility, and holiness. Yet, there is one quality that underpins them all in the face of a hostile world, and that is courage. The Christian life is not a quiet retreat; it is a spiritual battlefield. And on this battlefield, there is simply no place for the cowards!

Courage Not in Numbers

The Scriptures abound with examples of courageous, God-fearing individuals who, despite being outnumbered, displayed remarkable bravery for truth and righteousness. We recall the courage and faith of Caleb and Joshua as they affirmed the Israelites could take the land of Canaan, even with its strongly fortified cities (Numbers 14:8). In God's Kingdom, courage is not a suggestion; it is a command. When Joshua was commissioned to lead Israel into the Promised Land, a land filled with giants and fortified cities, the Lord's charge to him was emphatic: *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go"* (Joshua 1:9). The foundation for this courage was not Joshua's own strength or strategic skill, but the unwavering promise of God's presence. Our courage today must also spring from the presence of God, not from American Dollars or reliance on worldly things. Let us say with Paul,

"And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:19-20). We are called to be brave not by our own power, but in the strength of Jesus our Lord.

Our Calling Demands Courage

From the outset, we must understand the environment in which we serve. We are not diplomats in a friendly nation; we are soldiers behind enemy lines. The apostle Paul exhorted the saints at Ephesus: *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand"* (Ephesians 6:10-13). Our battle is not a carnal conflict; it involves faith, courage, determination, and preparation. Let's be clear, the struggle against forces of liberalism is not for the faint-hearted. It requires a resolve to stand one's ground, to hold the line of faith, and to advance the gospel in the face of spiritual and physical opposition. A soldier who flees at the first sign of conflict is of no use to his King. Likewise, a believer who shrinks back from proclaiming truth or living righteously for fear of backlash, ridicule, or discomfort has forgotten the nature of the war we are



in (cf. 2 Timothy 3:10-14).

Never in all the inspired record do we read of those enrolled in God's service surrendering, compromising, or retreating with God's approval. Today, many brethren are compromising the truth and surrendering ground that those before us fought so hard to gain on questions of the all-sufficiency of the Lord's Church, the role of men in leadership, and non-instrumental music in worship. It is not only sad but heart-wrenching that there are so many cowardly brethren unwilling to defend the blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16-17; Jude 3). Some seem to mistakenly believe that by watering down the truth to make it more compatible with the denominations and sectarians of this world (2 Timothy 4:1-5), they will convert others. However, we should know by now that nothing short of the pure, undiluted truth of God's word will convert the sinner from the error of his way (cf. James 5:19-20). The "*Sword of the Spirit*," which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17), was used effectively and boldly in the early days of the church, leading to the conversion of sinners throughout the known world. The same word of God remains potent today, accomplishing its purpose in the lives of those who obey it.

Every Man Stood In His Place

Similarly, the fearless three hundred who followed Gideon in defeating the Midianites (Judges 7) serve as a powerful example for God's children today. As Gideon prepared, he had twenty-two thousand. However, when the Lord indicated the number was too great, Gideon dismissed those who were fearful and trembling, resulting in ten thousand remaining. Later, his army was reduced to just three hundred. With these three hundred, they were able to put the Midianites to flight. Their faith and courage are

summed up thus: "*And every man stood in his place all around the camp...*" (Judges 7:21). How wonderful it would be if every faithful soldier of Christ would stand as Gideon's three hundred did in the long ago.

Today, God needs men to stand and proclaim that the blood-bought Church of our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28) is sufficient to do all the work that God has assigned it to do as the "*Pillar and ground of the truth*" (1 Timothy 3:15). Apostle Paul says, "*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, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Ephesians 3:10-11). The business of the Church of Christ is in saving souls through the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16-17), and keeping the saved safe through righteous and faithful living until the last day when Jesus will return (cf. Ephesians 5:27).

The Spirit We Have Received is Not of Fear

The Spirit of fear, which is the impulse to hide, to compromise, to remain silent when we should speak, is not from God. It is a tool of the enemy designed to paralyze the work of the church. Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7 reveals that fear is not from God but a tactic of the enemy meant to silence and paralyze believers. Instead, God equips His children with a Spirit of power, love and a sound mind. To live in cowardice is to reject this divine provision and operate outside the Spirit's intended mandate to "*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 2:1).

A Warning to Heed

The Bible does not mince words about the ultimate end of those who shrink back from standing up for the



defense of the gospel due to cowardice. In Revelation, John writes, "*But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*" (Revelation 21:8). It is a terrifying thought that the cowardly lead this list. Note that the latter is not speaking of a momentary lapse in courage, for which there is grace and forgiveness (cf. John 18:15-18, 25-27). It speaks of a defining characteristic of a person whose fear of man and fear of suffering outweighs their faith in Christ, leading them to deny Jesus by their life and actions. The coward in this instance is like a man in the parable who, out of fear, buried his master's talent instead of putting it to work (Matthew 25:24-26). His fear led to inaction, which was judged as wickedness. The same is true of those who, for fear of men, remain silent in the face of doctrinal errors in the Lord's Church today.

Our Resolution

Brethren, let us examine our hearts. Has a spirit of fear kept us silent when we should have shared the gospel? Has the fear of what others might think caused us to compromise our convictions? Has a desire for a comfortable, conflict-free life caused us to retreat from the front lines of service? Let us take heart, for the call is not to be fearless, but to act courageously despite our fear, trusting in the one who has already overcome the world (John 16:33). Let us therefore heed the great exhortation of the writer of Hebrews: "*But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved*" (Hebrews 10:39). The time for shrinking back is over. The King is calling His soldiers to stand firm, to speak out, and to serve with boldness. For in His glorious and advancing Kingdom, there is no place for the

cowards!

GOD IS FOR US

Satan would want nothing more than for Christians to abandon their faith. Sadly, this happens too often when the trials of this life become so difficult that many Christians decide to give up rather than persevere until the end.

Paul acknowledged the fact that we will face difficulties as we try to live the Christian life. He said *w e w o u l d f a c e s u c h t h i n g s a s "tribulation...distress...persecution...famine...nakedness...peril... [and] sword"* (Romans 8:35). There will be times when others will "*bring a charge against*" us as we strive to follow God. None of this is fair, yet it happens.

Because of this, Paul encouraged the saints in Rome (as well as us today) with the reminder that "*God is the one who justifies*" (Romans 8:33). So "*if God is for us, who is against us?*" (Romans 8:31). Yes, we will face opposition, temptation, and persecution; yet nothing can "*separate us from the love of God*" (Romans 8:39). We just need to make sure that we remain faithful and do not abandon Him.

So remember that God is for us. All of the difficulties we face – no matter how severe they seem in the moment – are only temporary. God loves us and is willing to save us; therefore, let us continue to follow Him.

Andy Sochor

Institutionalism

The Church And Human Organizations

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

The issues of human organizations doing the work of the local church as well as churches establishing and supporting these organizations, have continued to be a matter of concern among brethren particularly in the churches of Christ. Questions such as whether it is scriptural for churches of Christ to work with or through human organizations in carrying out her work and whether these institutions even have the right to exist have always been answered differently. As with every other Biblical issues, we must study the Bible carefully to understand what is God's will on the matter. In this writing, we would look at the New Testament to answer these questions.

Defining The Terms

Before we continue, it is important to define the terms in our topic to understand what we are talking about. The church refers to the church of our Lord Jesus church (Matthew 16:18) and specifically in its local sense (Acts 13:1; Romans 16:16). The local church is saddled with the responsibility of preaching the gospel (Ephesians 4:11-12), grooming members of the church (I Timothy 5:17; I Corinthians 14:26) as well as helping the needy members of the church (I Timothy 5:16; Romans 15:25-26).

A human organization, on the other hand according to Hailey (1956, p.22) is defined as "a body formed by man, governed by man, apart from divine origin or authority" (Cited in Cogdill 1984, p. 52). In this context, we are looking at institutions that are set up and operated or supported by individuals solely for the purpose of accomplishing the work of evangelism, edification and benevolence. Some examples of these human organizations would include Bible colleges established by men to train preachers and teachers for

the church, orphanages established by men to take care of orphans, and various forums established by men to do the work of teaching the brethren.

God Specified The Church In Doing The Work Evangelism, Edification And Benevolence

Let us begin with a simple explanation of the concepts of generic and specific authority. When something is specified in a command, the instruction is limited to what is specified and excludes other things that are not specified. For example, suppose you sent someone to get you some fruits and he comes back with some apples, has he obeyed your instruction? Definitely yes! But suppose you sent him to get you some bananas and he comes back with some oranges, would that be obedience to what you have sent him? Not at all for you have specified what he needed to buy. In the first instance, "fruits" is generic and gives the messenger the choice to get anything under the umbrella of what is called fruits but in the second example, banana is specific in the instruction and excludes every other kind of fruits.

Similarly, we notice in Genesis 6:14 that God gave the command to build the ark. God did not give a generic term: 'wood.' God gave a specific term: 'gopher wood.' And so, when God said, 'gopher wood,' that ruled out other kinds of wood. In II Kings 5:10, God's servant told Naaman to go wash seven times in Jordan. God did not simply have His servant say, 'in water,' but he said, 'in Jordan.' That meant 'in Jordan,' not some other body of water. In Leviticus 14:10-32, we notice that God said, "Offer a lamb." Had God simply said, 'Offer an animal,' any animal would have been sufficient. But God specified the lamb; ruling out all other kinds of animals. We notice in John 9:7, that Jesus said, "Go



wash in the pool of Siloam.” That would rule out other bodies of water.

We notice also, with respect to the work of the church, in Ephesians 3:10 and I Thessalonians 1:8, showing how the church is to preach the gospel. It is to evangelize. Had God simply said, 'organizations,' we could not rule out the Bible colleges and other kind of human institutions, but God specified 'the church,' the local congregation being God's organization for His people to work in organized capacity. That rules out other organizations.

The same thing is applicable with respect to edifying. In Ephesians 4:16, we notice that God says that “it,” (the church), might edify itself in love. If God had simply said 'organizations,' then an organization would have been sufficient. But God specified the church, that is, the local congregation to do that, ruling out other organizations.

In 1 Timothy 5:16 we notice that Paul says that “it,” (the church), might “relieve them that are widows indeed.” Acts 6 shows how the church did relieve some widows. If God had simply said 'organizations,' then human benevolent organizations might have been alright, but God did not say that. God specified the church, the congregation; therefore, that rules out benevolent human organizations.

There's no authority for human institutions to do any work of the church. When God specifies a thing, others are eliminated. And so, we see that God specified the church in evangelism, the church in edification, and the church in benevolence.

Can The Church Work With Or Through Human Organizations?

For every organization, there is a mission. A university is set up to educate people. A hospital is built by people for the purpose of taking care of the sick ones.

Also, the church is setup, designed and licensed by God to glorify Him (Ephesians 3:21) via true worship (John 4:24, Philippians 3:3) and by performing the functions of evangelism as well as edification and benevolence (cf. Ephesians 4:11-12). It was designed by the wisdom of God and was built by the Lord in fulfillment of God's eternal purpose to declare His manifold wisdom (Ephesians 3:10-11). Each local church is the pillar and ground of truth in its community, not any human organization (1 Timothy 3:15), the word of the Lord is to sound out from each congregation via its evangelists and/or members (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8, Romans 10:14-15, Acts 8:1-4). Any group of individuals cannot just lump themselves together and set up a university without meeting the criteria and given the license to start and/or operate a university by the appropriate government/authority. Similarly, God has not given any human organization the license to take over and do the work of the church for or on behalf her and no human organization even meets the criteria as the local church, and they have no authority to do such work.

If one reads the Bible carefully, can one imagine that there was any human organization apart from the local church that performed the work of evangelism? Certainly not! The churches in the New Testament did its work of evangelism by sending out evangelists (Acts 11:22; 13:1-5) and supporting a gospel preacher (Philippians 4:18). The congregation was the only medium through which the New Testament church functioned in the performance of its mission as each did its own work under the supervision of its own elders. There was no room for collaboration with a human organization. To allow a human organization to plan evangelism for a local church and dictate for her or for a local church to support a human organization is to surrender its right of doing a God



given assignment and forfeit the blessings therein; thereby destroying the autonomy of the church. Such a church has buried its talent. Christ authorized His disciples (followers) to preach the word (Matthew 28:18-20) and He allows them to do so first as officers of his established kingdom (Acts 1:4-8. Ephesians 4:11-12) and secondarily as individual members of his church (Acts 8:1-5). Jesus has neither mandated nor endorsed any human organization to preach His gospel.

Is The Church Collaboration With Human Organizations Methods Of Fulfilling The Mission Of The Church?

In discussions surrounding church support of Bible colleges, a common defense among institutional brethren is the claim that a Bible college is “just a method” of teaching the Bible and therefore permissible. However, this argument fails to make a necessary and biblical distinction between **methods** and **institutions using methods**. When Jesus said in Matthew 16:18 that “I will build My church”, was He in anyway suggesting that He was going to establish a method? The church is an institution just like any other institutions but while the church is a divine one, the others are human. So, if human institutions are methods of doing God's work, would the church also be said to be a method? If not why not?

A method refers to a means or way of accomplishing something. For example, a method of teaching might be writing, or using audio-visual aids. Methods are tools that may be used by individuals or local congregations to carry out divinely authorized work. Just as we earlier pointed out, the church, for instance, is authorized to teach, and it may use various scriptural methods to do so such as Bible classes, literature, or sermons. An institution, by contrast, is a

separate organized body often with its own leadership, structure, funding, and mission. A Bible college, for example is an organization, typically incorporated, that owns property, hires staff, sets a curriculum, collects tuition, and issues degrees or certificates. It is not simply a method of teaching; it is a man-made organization that employs a wide range of methods.

This distinction is critical because the New Testament reveals **the local church** and not human institutions as the organization through which God intended His work to be carried out. When a Bible college is supported or funded by a church, that church is effectively outsourcing its God-given work to a man-made institution. This is not equivalent to a local congregation using a method like printed literature or a public hall. Instead, it is forming a parallel organization, unauthorized in Scripture, to do the work that belongs exclusively to the church, namely, the spiritual education and edification of saints.

Do Human Organizations Have A Right To Exist Even If They Are Not Supported By The Church?

There is nothing wrong with human organizations existing in secular or private religious contexts. The issue is not whether these organizations can exist, but whether the local church is authorized to fund, endorse, or partner with them in doing the work God assigned to the church. There is a difference between what individual Christians may do in their private capacity and what the local church, acting as a collective body, is authorized by Scripture to do. For example, two or three brethren may come together to help resolve a conflict without necessarily telling or involving the church (Matthew 18:15-18). Two brethren having the same widowed parent or grandparent may come together to relieve them



without placing the burden on the church (I Timothy 5:4, 16). A group of individual brethren may decide to go “everywhere preaching the word” on their own without necessarily being sent by the church (Acts 8:4; 11:19). All of these actions, even though not done by the church are scriptural. What is unscriptural is not the existence of human organizations, but their financial or operational support from the church treasury. Such support assumes that the church can transfer its assigned work to another body and that man-made institutions can serve as intermediaries between the church and its work as well as the fact that such arrangements are acceptable despite the silence of the Scriptures on such practices as earlier explained.

An individual Christian may start a private orphanage. This is not sinful in itself. But when that orphanage is organized as a separate corporation and then receives funds from church treasuries to carry out benevolence work on behalf of the churches, this becomes unscriptural. The local church is fully capable and responsible to do its benevolent work directly, as we see in Acts 6; Acts 11:27-20 and 1 Corinthians 16:1-4. Same thing applies to evangelism. Nothing prohibits brethren from behaving like those in Acts 8:4 and Acts 11:19 who “went everywhere preaching the word” even when the church did not directly send them out. But nowhere in the New Testament do we read of a church outsourcing or delegating its responsibilities to a man-made organization, regardless of the purpose or efficiency of such an arrangement.

There is no biblical objection to human institutions existing so long as they are not funded by church treasuries; they do not do the work assigned to the church for her; and they are not represented as extensions of the church. Human organizations or private Christian endeavors such as publishing

houses, colleges, etc. may operate under individual ownership and responsibility, and Christians may choose to support them from their personal means, as long as they do not attempt to serve as the organized function of the church. They may exist but **not as substitutes or auxiliaries of the Lord's church, and not with the financial support of local churches.** To authorize such would be to go beyond the doctrine of Christ (II John 9), and to substitute human wisdom for divine instruction. This is consistent with New Testament principles and preserves the autonomy and divine structure of the local church.

Conclusion

Church support of human institutions violates the independence of the local church. In many human organizations supported by churches to do the Lord's work, the management of such organization (sometimes Board of Trustees or directors as the case may be) supervised the work of evangelism in which all the contributing churches participated. The elders of the contributing churches surrendered their oversight of that work to the Board of Directors of a human institution. This clearly violates local church independence (I Peter 5:1-2). We must respect the silence of the Scriptures in organizational matters, and uphold the autonomy and sufficiency of the local church as God's designed vehicle for spiritual work. The pattern in the New Testament is clear: the local church operates independently, doing its own teaching and supporting its own workers. When churches begin funding a college, they are not just choosing a “method.” They are supporting a separate institution with its own goals and oversight. This fundamentally alters the organization and function of the local church — leading to the very institutionalism that fractured the Restoration Movement in the mid-20th century.

Myth Buster

The Lord's Supper: More Than A Tradition

By Emmanuel Oluwatoba | Niger, Nigeria

The Lord's Supper is one of the most sacred practices in the Christian faith. Sadly, many believers today view it as little more than a long-standing tradition, a simple ritual repeated on Sundays without much thought. This is dangerous because it means that the Lord's supper is taken casually. The Bible presents it as far more than a human custom. Instituted by Jesus Himself, the Lord's Supper carries deep meaning, spiritual nourishment, and eternal significance. Let us reflect on its true purpose by looking at several key aspects.

Instituted by Christ

The Lord's Supper was not the invention of the church, nor a practice passed down by human wisdom. It was established by Jesus on the night of His betrayal. As He broke bread and gave the cup, *“And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you’* (Luke 22:19–20). Paul reminds us that this was something “received from the Lord” and not from men, *“For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,”* (1 Corinthians 11:23). Because it was instituted by Christ Himself, it carries His authority and stands as a divine command rather than a human tradition. This means that it is a key act of worship.

A Proclamation of the Gospel

Each time we share in the bread and cup, we are not only remembering the cross but also proclaiming it. Paul wrote, *“For as often as you eat this bread and*

drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). The Supper is therefore both backward-looking, reminding us of the sacrifice of Christ, and forward-looking, pointing us to His return. It is a living proclamation of the gospel that binds the church together across time.

A Call to Reverence and Self-Examination

The Corinthians were rebuked for treating the Lord's Supper casually. Some participated in a selfish, careless way and brought judgment upon themselves (1 Corinthians 11:27–29). This shows that the Supper is not something to take lightly. It is a sacred act of worship that calls for self-examination, reverence, and gratitude. The early church “devoted themselves...to the breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42), recognizing its importance in their fellowship and faith. When we believe that the Lord's Supper is a casual human tradition, we may fail to examine ourselves and fall into the same danger as the Corinthians.

A Source of Spiritual Nourishment and Unity

While the bread and cup are not literal flesh and blood, they are far more than empty symbols. Paul calls the bread “**a sharing of the body of Christ**” and the cup “**a sharing of the blood of Christ**” (1 Corinthians 10:16). In this act, believers are reminded that their fellowship with God is grounded in Christ's sacrifice. At the same time, the Supper unites the church, for “we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17). It nourishes our faith and deepens our unity. This is another way the Corinthians were going wrong, they failed to partake of the feasts in unity, instead, they applied selfishness.



Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is not just a tradition, nor a mere ritual to be performed out of habit. It is a Christ-given command, a proclamation of the gospel, a sacred act of worship, and a spiritual blessing for the church. Each time we gather around the table, we are reminded of the price of our redemption, strengthened in our faith, and united as the body of Christ. Far from being an empty custom, it is a living testimony of God's grace that sustains us until the Lord returns. Remember, *"So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves."* When we approach the Lord's table with reverence, faith, and gratitude, we are participating in something holy and something far greater than a tradition. It is the Lord's gift to His people, and through it, we proclaim His death until He comes again. Amen.

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

Franklin Graham and others can be seen in TV commercials telling people to be saved by praying to Jesus. But is a prayer by the repentant believer how Jesus saves sinners? It was not how Jesus saved Saul nor how He saves sinners today (Acts 9:9-11; 22:16). Graham's message is just one of many false salvation plans promoted and practiced worldwide. The Bible reveals the true path to salvation. A plan is a program of action, "a scheme for making, doing, or arranging something" (Webster). Football teams have game plans, architects have building plans, and teachers follow a lesson plan. Before smartphones, many people used day planners to arrange their daily

activities.

Having a plan indicates order and definition. Ephesians 1:3-14 reveals that God has executed His plan of saving the lost through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we refer to God's plan of salvation in Christ as the "scheme of redemption." When we speak of the plan of salvation, we refer to the arrangement that sinners must believe and follow to receive God's salvation from sin. The gospel of Christ reveals God's plan or arrangement by which He forgives our sins in Christ (Eph. 2:1-9).

Here is a brief outline of the plan of salvation God has revealed in the Scriptures that results in saving every sinner who obeys it. First, one must hear the gospel to be drawn to Christ and believe in Him (John 6:44-45; Acts 2:22; Rom. 10:17). Next, one must believe in God and Christ (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24). Without faith, nobody will be saved. Sinners are brought to faith in Christ by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31).

The gospel that causes faith also commands sinners to confess their faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37). Confession of faith is unto (in the direction of) salvation (Rom. 10:10). Faith in Jesus also compels sinners to repent (another commandment of Christ for salvation, Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30; 20:21).

Having changed one's mind toward God and sin, what remains is for Christ to wash away one's past sins, which happens when the sinner is baptized into Christ (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27).

Saved in Christ, the Christian is added by the Lord to His church and taught to live an obedient life of service to Jesus (Acts 2:47; Rom. 6:17-18; 12:1-2; Titus 2:11-12). Yes, God has a plan of salvation, but not the one Mr. Graham advocates. So the question is, have you obeyed God's plan of salvation? Why not do so now (2 Cor. 6:2; Acts 22:16)?

- Joe R. Price

IDEAL HOME



Real Men

By Randy Blackaby

Real men are becoming a lost commodity. Men who know their role in the family, in society, and in the world are harder and harder to find.

The feminist movement, which has entered its second generation, has failed utterly in its mission to liberate women but has caused many men to lose their sense of masculinity and purpose in marriage and the home. Most men, it would appear, have abdicated their role as family leaders under societal pressures initiated by the feminist movement.

Today's talk shows, classrooms, and workplaces repeatedly are heard advocating the creation of unisex or androgynous human beings with no difference in functions, despite the ever-greater volumes of data about the physical and emotional differences between the sexes.

The feminist goals include complete mutual decision-making and shared authority in the home, equal sharing of the role of supporting the family financially, and full sharing of home-making and child-care functions. This has been sold as a "fair" system and compared negatively with "traditional" arrangements where separate roles were identified for husbands and wives.

While these "goals" have been identified and approved by the society in general, the "results" have been catastrophic.

Shared leadership concepts have resulted in no leadership because equality of authority is antithetical to the very concept of leadership.

With the majority of women insisting on sharing in the income production role that once was the male domain, larger and larger numbers of children are being surrendered to the care of modern day "orphans

homes" -- the daycare center, and the public school system.

As biblical patterns for marriage roles and family life are abandoned there is emerging a rapid increase in sexual dysfunction in marriage and, sometimes, abandonment of natural sexual roles for homosexual perversions. Divorce and broken homes are now more normal in many communities than the intact family.

And, without functioning families, children are left without the environment necessary to teach love, morality, and personal responsibility. Our overburdened judicial and prison systems are but another manifestation of the end results.

What is needed critically today are men who understand their purpose and roles as leaders of their families. Needed are men who carry out their God-ordained duties to wives and children.

The Bible teaches, in passages like [1 Corinthians 11:3](#) and [Ephesians 5:23](#), that husbands are to be the "heads" of their wives and families. To people who reject the Bible outright this means nothing but to those who respect God's word it clearly asserts a husband's leadership, and authority to direct and rule in the home.

By understanding the concept of "headship" one can see God's wisdom. Just as a human body with two heads would be a paralyzed monstrosity so is the home with two heads.

Men today need to re-learn what home leadership is all about. Issuing orders, and receiving deference and respect may be a part of it but much more is involved.



God tells the man to be the "provider" for his family in [1 Timothy 5:8](#). The authority given to a man also calls for him to be a primary teacher and guide to the family, both in word and example.

Unlike most typical homes today, God's ideal home has the husband and father being the principal disciplinarian responsible for the training, development, and correction of his children. Passages in the Bible like [Ephesians 6:4](#) show a man he has this responsibility. When he abdicates this job or delegates it completely to his wife, he has failed.

The real model for husband-like leadership is found in the example of Jesus himself, not in the macho-ism of the contemporary scene. Jesus led by love, sacrifice, and submission of personal well-being and desires to the well-being of others.

The feminist movement is not totally responsible for the negative attitudes toward male leadership in the home today. Men who have abused or abdicated their responsibilities in the past are partially the cause.

But whatever the past failures and their causes, the crying need today is for men to re-assume their responsibilities and to lead, guide, and love their wives and families through the morass of evils that today threaten our homes, nation, and world.

Leadership will not be easy in our unisex society. But, then, leadership never has been easy. Real men are needed for the task.

TAKE COURAGE

In a lengthy discussion with His disciples before His death, Jesus explained to them that He was going away. *"A little while, and you will no longer see Me"* (John 16:16). He told them, *"I came forth from the Father and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again and going to the Father"* (John 16:28).

Jesus' departure would mean difficulties for His disciples. He was going to be crucified. And while He would be raised from the dead and ascend to heaven, His followers were going to face persecution. He told them, *"Behold, an hour is coming, and has already come, for you to be scattered, each to his own home, and to leave Me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me"* (John 16:32).

Jesus knew the Father was going to be with Him through it all. Yet His disciples needed some reassurance. So He said, *"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

Interestingly, Jesus said He had already *"overcome the world"* even though He had not yet gone to the cross. Yet His victory over His enemies, Satan, and death was so certain that He could speak of it as if it has already happened. This was to provide encouragement to them and to us in whatever difficulties may come.

So take courage. We will face tribulation while we live here, yet Jesus has already defeated every enemy – including death. Therefore, let us endure all things with hope and faith in Him.

Andy Sochor

SALVATION

Irresistible Grace: How Are We Saved By Grace Through Faith?

By Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba | Lagos, Nigeria

Among the doctrines of Calvinism, none is more central to its system of salvation than the teaching of Irresistible Grace. It forms the “I” in the well-known TULIP acronym and is closely tied to other Calvinistic points such as total depravity, unconditional election, and perseverance of the saints. In essence, the doctrine of Irresistible Grace asserts that in the salvation of sinners, God extends an inward, supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that cannot be resisted. This means that an individual will inevitably be saved, regardless of his personal will or response.

This doctrine portrays the grace of God as an overpowering force, something that operates without and even against the individual's own will, bringing about conversion regardless of the person's initial resistance. The Calvinist claim is that when the Holy Spirit calls the elect to salvation, His call is unfailingly effective—it always results in regeneration and faith. In their view, grace is “irresistible” precisely because God's will to save the elect cannot be thwarted.

One Calvinist statement of faith puts the doctrine of Irresistible Grace this way:

“The HOLY SPIRIT, in order to bring God's elect to salvation, extends to them A SPECIAL INWARD CALL in addition to the outward call contained in the gospel message. Through this special call the Holy Spirit performs a work of grace within the sinner which inevitably brings him to faith in Christ. The inward change wrought in the elect sinner enables him to understand and believe spiritual truth; in the spiritual realm he is given the seeing eye and the hearing ear. The Spirit creates within him a new heart or a new nature” (THE FIVE POINTS OF CALVINISM, by Steele

& Thomas, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., p.48)

Diligent students of the Bible must reject this doctrine because it does not harmonize with the whole counsel of God as revealed in Scripture. The Calvinistic idea of Irresistible Grace rests on several key assumptions: that man is born totally unable to respond to God without a miraculous operation of the Spirit; that God has unconditionally elected certain individuals to salvation and others to damnation; that the Spirit must regenerate a person before they can believe; and that the human will plays no decisive role in salvation. If any of these premises are found to be false, the entire doctrine is undermined.

When we turn to Scripture, we find repeated evidence that God's grace can in fact be resisted. Stephen, in his address to the Jewish council in Acts 7:51, boldly declared, “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.” This statement directly contradicts the idea that the Spirit's work is irresistible. Similarly, in Matthew 23:37, Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, saying, “How often I wanted to gather your children together... but you were not willing!” In these words we see the will of God in conflict with the will of man. Christ desired to bless, yet the people refused His invitation.

Furthermore, the Bible teaches that salvation is offered to all, not just to a pre-selected few. Paul wrote in Titus 2:11, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” And in 1 Timothy 2:3–4 he declared that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” These passages stand in opposition to the Calvinistic



limitation of grace to the elect. If God's grace has truly appeared to all, yet all are not saved, the only logical conclusion is that His grace can indeed be rejected.

Calvinism also claims that faith must be produced by a direct, irresistible act of the Spirit before a person can respond to the gospel. The Scriptures teach otherwise. Paul says in Romans 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." John affirms in John 20:31 that the things written about Christ are "that you may believe... and that believing you may have life in His name." The Holy Spirit works through the inspired Word (Ephesians 6:17), not by an overpowering force that overrides human will. People believe when they hear and accept the message of the gospel, not because they were mysteriously regenerated beforehand.

The New Testament also shows that God's call does not guarantee a positive response. In Matthew 22:14 Jesus concluded a parable with the words, "For many are called, but few are chosen." When Paul reasoned with Felix about righteousness and judgment in Acts 24:25, Felix became afraid but dismissed Paul, saying, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." He heard the call but resisted it.

Moreover, if Irresistible Grace were true, it would be impossible for a believer to fall away, yet the Scriptures warn repeatedly of this danger. In Galatians 5:4 Paul tells some Christians, "You have fallen from grace." The writer of Hebrews cautions believers in 3:12, "Beware... lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." Such warnings are meaningless unless it is possible to resist or abandon the grace of God.

The Bible contains numerous examples of individuals who resisted God's grace. The rich young ruler, though loved by Jesus and offered eternal life, "went

away sorrowful" because he would not obey (Mark 10:17–22). The Pharisees in Luke 7:30 "rejected the will of God for themselves." The Israelites in the wilderness, though delivered from Egypt, hardened their hearts and perished without entering the promised land (Hebrews 3:16–19)—a lesson explicitly given to warn Christians against unbelief.

From the scriptural perspective, the true nature of God's grace is this: it is His unmerited favor in offering salvation through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9). It is extended to all people (Titus 2:11), but it must be received by faith (Romans 5:1–2). It can be rejected (2 Corinthians 6:1), and it is administered through the gospel, the Word of God, which is the Spirit's instrument of conviction (John 16:8; Ephesians 6:17). God does not force His grace upon anyone; rather, He calls all to willingly obey Him.

In light of this, the doctrine of Irresistible Grace is found wanting. While it is true that no one can be saved without God's grace, the Bible presents grace not as an overpowering, coercive force but as a gracious invitation that can be either accepted or refused. God wants willing obedience, not forced compliance (Joshua 24:15). This is why the closing invitation of the Bible still stands for every person: "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

The grace of God is indeed amazing, but not because it strips us of choice. It is amazing because, despite our sin, God offers us forgiveness, transformation, and eternal life, and He allows us the dignity of responding in faith.

How Are We Saved By Grace Through Faith?

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul penned



words that have comforted and inspired Christians for centuries: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). In these two short verses, Paul summarizes the essence of salvation. Yet, as simple as the words may sound, they are often misunderstood or taken out of their biblical context.

From the scriptural perspective, salvation begins with grace. Grace is God's unmerited favor—His kindness extended to us when we had no way to save ourselves. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). The just penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). Yet, because of His love, God offers forgiveness and eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ. Grace means that our salvation is not something we earn by our own goodness; it is a gift given to the undeserving. As Paul told Titus, “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11).

However, Paul does not say we are saved by grace alone—he says it is by grace through faith. Faith is our trusting response to God's grace. It is not merely believing that God exists, but trusting Him enough to submit to His will. True faith moves us to act. James makes this clear when he writes that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26). Abraham believed God, but his faith was shown to be genuine when he obeyed God's commands (James 2:21–23). In the same way, faith accepts God's gift on His terms, not ours.

This is why the New Testament presents salvation as involving both God's part and man's response. God, by His grace, has made salvation possible through the death and resurrection of Christ. Man, through faith, responds to that gift in obedience to the gospel. The Bible teaches that such obedience includes hearing

the message of Christ (Romans 10:17), believing in Him (John 8:24), repenting of our sins (Acts 17:30), confessing our faith in Him (Romans 10:9–10), and being baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Far from being an attempt to “earn” salvation, these acts are the natural outworking of genuine faith—trusting God enough to do what He says.

Baptism, in particular, is sometimes misunderstood. Some dismiss it as a mere outward ritual, but the Bible presents it as the moment when God's grace meets our obedient faith. Paul wrote in Colossians 2:12 that in baptism we are “buried with Him” and “raised with Him through faith in the working of God.” In Acts 22:16, Ananias told Saul of Tarsus to “arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” The washing is God's work, not ours; baptism is the means by which we submit to that work.

All of this ensures that the glory for our salvation belongs to God alone. Since it is by grace, we cannot boast in our own righteousness. We were not saved because we were good enough; we were saved because God was gracious enough. Our part is simply to receive the gift in faith, trusting Him enough to obey His commands. As Paul reminded the Corinthians, “Let him who glories glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31).

In the end, salvation is a beautiful harmony between God's grace and man's faith. Grace is God's part—it is the provision of salvation through Christ's sacrifice. Faith is our part—it is our trusting, obedient response to what God has done. God's grace makes salvation possible; our faith makes it personal. This is why Paul urges us in 2 Corinthians 6:1 not to “receive the grace of God in vain.” The gift has been offered; the choice to accept it rests with us.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: Why does the King James Version of the Bible use the word “Easter” in Acts 12:4, and is that translation accurate?

Answer: The use of the word “*Easter*” in Acts 12:4 of the King James Version (KJV) is a mistranslation. The original Greek word used in that verse is “*pascha*,” which correctly translates to “*Passover*,” not *Easter*. This is accurately rendered in more recent translations, such as the New King James Version.

Context within the chapter supports this correction. Acts 12:3 clearly states that the events took place “*during the Days of Unleavened Bread*.” According to Luke 22:1, “*the Feast of Unleavened Bread*” is also referred to as “*Passover*” even within the KJV itself. Therefore, since Acts 12:3 situates the narrative during the Days of Unleavened Bread, the following verse (12:4) must also refer to the same period. It follows that Herod intended to bring Peter out *after Passover*, not *Easter*.

Additionally, the term “*Easter*” as commonly used today refers to a later religious tradition developed centuries after the time of the apostles. There is no evidence in Scripture that the early church observed a special annual celebration of the resurrection. Instead, Christians in the first century commemorated the Lord's death and resurrection every first day of the week by partaking of the Lord's Supper, as instructed in passages such as Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 11:23–26. The use of “*Easter*” in Acts 12:4 likely reflects the influence of later church traditions familiar to the KJV translators, rather than the actual meaning of the Greek word *pascha*, which referred to the Jewish Passover. Therefore, inserting “*Easter*” into the text introduces a historical inaccuracy not supported by either the original language or New

Testament practice.

Question: Some claim that Adam had a wife before Eve named Lilith. Why is this not mentioned in the Bible, and how should this claim be understood?

Answer: The idea that Adam had a wife named Lilith before Eve is a myth with no basis in Scripture. This notion originates from extra-biblical folklore and mystical writings such as the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, a medieval Jewish text, rather than from the inspired Word of God. The Bible, which is given by divine inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21), contains no reference to Lilith as a historical person, nor does it present her as part of the creation account.

Scripture clearly affirms that God created one man and one woman (Adam and Eve) at the beginning. Genesis 2:24 records the creation of Eve from Adam's side and establishes the divine pattern for marriage. This truth is confirmed by Jesus Himself in Matthew 19:4–6, where He refers to the Genesis account as foundational. There is no biblical warrant for inserting another figure into this narrative.

In matters of faith, the responsibility is to stay within the boundaries of revealed Scripture, to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent. Accepting myths or speculative traditions as truth undermines the sufficiency and authority of God's Word. Therefore, the claim that Lilith was Adam's first wife should be rejected as unfounded and contrary to the inspired record.

Answers provided by Osamagbe Lesley Egharevba

Addendum

Attempts To Be Like Denominations

By Joseph I. Oyerinde | Lagos, Nigeria

One of the problems that have, over the years, been tactically facing the Lord's church till date is various attempts to be like denominational Churches in practice. It greatly baffles that Denomination that was not in existence when the Lord's church was first established is now good epitome to some brethren in practice. In their thinking they suppose that if the church does not respond to change as Denominations do, the Lord's true church will not be relevant in time to come; and no increase will be evident in our effort to spread the true gospel. To remain and stay where the church has been longtime ago in such our advanced world is ignorance, myopic and narrow minded to them. Obviously they were like Israel of old who only wanted king to judge them "like all the nations" (I Sam. 8:5). But we learnt that such attempt was a clear rejection of God to reign over them (I Sam. 8:7). This forever remains a timely lesson and admonition for us "upon whom the end of the ages have come" (I Cor. 10:11).

The term denomination literally denotes division, in different and separate group or segregation. Meanwhile, in religious world, it connotes different, separate religious people with common belief in Jesus but differ in names, administrations, doctrines and practices. From this viewpoint, that is why a denominational Church will not have the same name with another. This is because there are different identity, practice and administration of one Denomination to another. However, the scriptures clearly revealed to us that to denominate in Christianity is contrary to Christ's earnest prayer for unity among those who claim common belief in Him (John 17:11-23). Division in Christ is not what the Holy Spirit pleaded believers in Christ to earnestly

keep and maintain (I Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:3). All these altogether make the existence of Denominations to be unscriptural and even anti-scriptural. So, denominational Church as we have them almost in every nook and cranny are not initiation of God; they are only mere invention of men!

One of the current and glaring attempts to be like Denomination is reaching the lost souls with social gospel instead of the soul-saving gospel. In order to save souls today, some brethren want us to be like Denominations in building of secular school, construction of major roads, provision of social amenities such as electricity, pipe born water, bore hole etc. for the public use. They think these will aid the church to have immense influence on the community just as JCMI (Jos Christian Mission International) had immense impact on the youth of the host community by creating a conducive football and basket ball fields. They fail to realize that there is a wide margin of difference between "increase that is from God" (Col. 2:19) and increase that is from men. In the scheme of human's redemption, God has always been concerned with the hearts, not with heads; He counts hearts, not heads (cf. I Sam. 16:7). So, social gospel, in this respect, will not really move people out of their sincere mind to search for the saving truth but to only seek Christ because of the comfort of this passing world with using (John 6:26). People must learn, as Christ said, to labour not for the food or worldly things which perish but for that which endure to everlasting life (John 6:27).

There are still effective means to preach the saving gospel without resorting to social gospel. Printing and distribution of tracts could still convey the true saving story of Christ on the cross; distribution of gospel



Disc, arrangement for private discussion from house to house, email and web pages, radio and TV. Even our individual sound moral life cannot be underestimated in having immense impact on the life of others and reaching them with the saving gospel (Matt. 5:13-16; II Cor. 3:2; I Pet. 2:12; 3:1-2) without deceit and enticement with so-called social gospel. Certainly, while “we must not discourage legitimate evangelistic enterprise; but we must challenge those who use the noble necessity of evangelism as a sanction for unscriptural innovation. We must not permit our burning desire to save souls to act as the impetus for our disobedience to the ultimate will of our Father” (Miller, 1996, p.68).

Another current attempt to be like Denomination is making marriage ceremony a church ordinance. This all started gradually by addressing marriage invitation card to the church instead to individual Christians. At least, there is a clear difference between the church and individuals despite that both are interrelated (cf. Matt. 18:15-17; I Tim. 5:16). It goes on to the use of the church's properties such as public address system, meeting hall etc. for social ceremonies. Now, it has come to the extreme that the church engages in practice of issuing marriage certificate and using of the Lord's money to support such social ceremonies. Do these gradual steps away from the landmark of the truth not disclose to us a glaring attempt to be like “all the nations” — denominations?

“True, the church building is not sacred” as Leslie Diestelkamp noted, “but, on the other hand, it is not a carnal, worldly place either. Money for the building was given to be used in spiritual work. Remember, we do not object to eating in the church building (babies often do it, workers sometimes do it, the preacher frequently does so in his office, etc.), but we do object to making the church building an ‘eating place.’ It is

not wrong to laugh in the church building, but it is certainly wrong to make it a ‘house of laughter.’ The church house is not ‘the house of God’ (I Timothy 3:15), but it IS God's house (John 2:16)” (n. d.). “In view of this,” Ezekiel Ajayi noted, “the use of church meeting hall, chairs, the Lord's money and the public address system of the church is not only a misunderstanding of the mission of the church but it is also a sacrilege (cf. Rom. 2:22; Daniel 5:1-6, 22-31)” (2009 p. 5). While none of social ceremonies is church ordinance, all that the church can do is to teach her members involved to conduct themselves well and faithful, and to shoulder their responsibility as deem fit of one who names the name of Christ. Teaching the truth is part of edifying work of the church without involvement in social ceremonies.

But it is unfortunate that this and many such innovations are rearing their ugly heads into the church of God because some brethren in some quarters cannot clearly distinguish between difference between individual Christians and the church collective, and difference in their obligations. There is much need to know that while some epistles of the New Testament were written to churches, yet within those books there were instructions strictly for individual Christians to discharge. For instance, the epistle of Galatians were addressed to “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2), but in the same book individual Christians were mandated to eschew the works of the flesh such as adultery, fornication, revelries, drunkenness etc. (Gal. 5:19-21), as well as to do good unto all men especially the household of the saints (Gal. 6:10). Similarly, some epistles were written to individuals wherein there were instructions for the church to do. For example, while Paul's epistle was addressed to “Timothy, my own son in the faith” (I Tim. 1:2), yet he gave instruction therein for the



church to “relieve them that are widows indeed” (I Tim. 5:16, KJV). In view of this, Julius Egharevba rightly said:

Individual existed with responsibilities thousands of years before the establishment of the church and of course, God never removed these duties from man and put it upon the church, but rather He encouraged man to perform it better as Christian. Marriage is as old as human race, God did not transfer the responsibility of marriage from who is marrying to the church, so is death and the responsibility of burying the dead remains upon the shoulder of the family of the dead, sympathizers, friends, brothers and sisters in the Lord individually. There is no time individual duties became that of the church. Though, there are duties assigned to both individual and the church, it must be properly managed. (as cited in Oyerinde, 2019, pp.132-133)

Furthermore, another new attempt to be like Denomination that is gradually becoming rampant is “chorus-prayer” (or chain-prayer) and “night vigil”. These days, it seems like some saints are gradually losing their faith in prayer pattern divinely given. Problems of this world and wind of change in the society and religious world are somehow affecting some people's reasoning to think that we have not been doing much in prayer, and thus no much result is achieved through our prayers. Isolation and abuse from people outside that “we are not praying” is gradually affecting some people's reasoning. Therefore, it's becoming desire of some to pray the way Denominations do outside of God's will, and to clamour for night vigil as if prayer must only be done in the night before it's recognized and well answered by God. To pray in the night as a church is not what is

wrong at least if such hour is well considered more expedient (Acts 12:5-12; 16:25), but to have prayer meeting in the day and still consider night vigil as a must tradition like Denomination is clearly a gradual attempt to walk both in the shadow and path of Denominations. The divine pattern of prayer that could be learnt from the scriptures is that men should pray each in turn while others involved should join with common understanding to say amen at conclusion (I Tim. 2:8; I Cor. 14:16; Acts 4:23-30; Matt. 5:9-13). When this is done in faith without vain repetition as “according to God's will, He hears us” (James 1:5-8; I John 5:14).

Moreover, Drama and quiz competition are also becoming part of the church programmes. Similarly, amusement and entertaining the audience are becoming covert focus of activities of some churches. These are evident when a church discerns drama and quiz competitions for their children with arranged prizes and round of applause for winners; and when church is bringing out theme and topics that have no clear related Bible text, but a reflection of denominational theology in handling of the Bible text. No doubt, these innovations will certainly materialise in the churches that have, over the years, carelessly grown weak in sound doctrine and practice; and in churches that are less concerned with deep spirituality of their members. These are telltale signs of gradual (but unnoticed) departure from the old path (cf. Jer. 6:16). Dave Miller noted:

Drama will not contribute any positive elements to the communication event – except the dimension of entertainment and human performance. Drama does not elevate the spirituality of the worshipper. All that God wants accomplished is achieved through a simple preaching of His word. Ultimately, drama trivializes the gospel. It transforms the gospel proclamation into



a spectator sport. (1996, p. 243).

Likewise, nearly seven decades ago B. C. Goodpasture sternly addressed these activities thus:

It is not the mission of the church to furnish amusement for the world or even for its members. Innocent amusement in proper proportion has its place in the life of all normal persons, but it is not the business of the church to furnish it . . . The church was not established to feature athletics. Rather it emphasizes the principle that 'bodily exercise is profitable for little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of life which now is, and of that which is to come' (1 Tim. 4:8). For the church to turn aside from its divine work to furnish amusement and recreation is to pervert its mission. It is to degrade its mission. Amusement and recreation should stem from the home rather than the church. The church, like Nehemiah, has a great work to do and should not come down on the plains of Ono to amuse and entertain. As the church turns its attention to amusement and recreation, it will be shorn of its power as Samson was when his hair was cut. Only when the church becomes worldly, as it pillows its head in the lap of Delilah, will it turn from its wonted course to relatively unimportant matters. (as cited in Mayberry, 1988)

Dear brethren, all these liberal trends and such like are gradually materialised among brethren in various quarters. We cannot be indifferent to them and think all is well. "Indifference is the soil in which apostasy thrives!" (Shrophshire, n.d.). Besides, remember, what goes around, comes around. So, steps away from the ancient landmark of the truth are always gradual. Hence, the people of God in every generation are

always one step away from apostasy. For us to remain holding fast to the faith once for all time delivered, we need to always be on guard. Therefore, let us keep watching.

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