

# GRACE & TRUTH



## THE WORD OF GOD IS THE TRUTH

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17



# TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH

N A I R O B I

## NO. 125 2016 CONTENTS

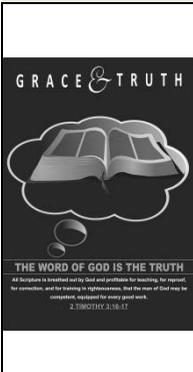
### Editor's Desk

*We welcome you to read and profit from 'Grace & Truth', a publication of Trinity Baptist Church, Nairobi. We believe there is a very great need for serious Biblical literature to be produced in our country of Kenya. We trust your soul will be fed and that you will be challenged from the Word of God. We welcome feedback from you by letter, phone or email. Please also visit us on the web at: [www.trinity.or.ke](http://www.trinity.or.ke)*

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## GRACE & TRUTH Magazine



**Cover:** Any one desiring to live a life that pleases God will achieve this by the truth contained in the Word of God. God's will for His people is their sanctification (1 Thes. 4:3) and this is in answer to Christ's prayer: *'Sanctify them in the truth: Your word is truth'*. The Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only rule to direct us on how to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible.

We call this magazine **Grace & Truth**. To know the exact truth is of vital importance. But when we start by carefully defining the truth as it is in the Bible, and therefore showing what is in error, many people object. This is especially true if a time-honoured or very popular perception is challenged. We saw this recently with the visit of Pope Francis to Kenya. Not only Catholics, but Protestants, and not only religious people, but those who never frequent a place of worship, were excited. And now in this Editorial we write that this excitement was totally misplaced, for the Pope is not in reality what the Catholic Church claims he is. In fact the claim that is made is an affront to God! You will read this in the article by Vincent Kajuma in this issue of *Grace & Truth*. Our statement that they are in very serious error causes at least 2 challenges against us.

1. How can so many people be wrong, we are asked? But is it true that majority public opinion is always right? Who was right about the Flood, Noah or all of his contemporaries? Who was right about the kingdom of God, Jesus or the multitude that cried ‘Crucify Him!’ Who was right about the solar system, Galileo or the Church and society that persecuted him? The sad thing is that there have been times when *everyone* has been wrong. The most knowledgeable person knows so little of all there is to know. In addition, *all* by nature are blind to the truth. We just cannot understand. We are rebels against the truth, suppressing what is plain (Romans 1:18-19, see also vv. 21ff., 3:11, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 4:17-18). This is why, on fundamental issues of the Christian Faith, we should expect most people to be wrong. Jesus goes so far as to say, “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you...” (Luke 6:26). So we can never arrive at the truth by way of ‘democracy’, counting the number of votes. But if God says it in the Bible then it is the truth, even if no one were to receive it!

2. You are being judgmental, we are told. His evident sincerity is pointed out. He speaks out for the disadvantaged. And does he not use the same Bible as everyone else? Our response is that there is truth in each of these. But sincerity and good works are not the foundation of our faith. It is not just using the Bible for all sorts of different teachings have supposedly be drawn out of the Bible. The great question is, ‘How can sinners be made right with God?’ The answer is, ‘Through the work of Christ by faith alone and not by works’ (e.g. Galatians 2:16, Philippians 3:9). But the Pope does not believe

this! His Church pronounces an anathema (a curse) on any who teach faith *alone*. So are we being judgmental? If you wish to go to Mombasa from Nairobi but I find you on the road to Nakuru and I tell you strongly that you are going the wrong way, am I being judgmental? Rather because I love you I do not want you to waste time and money so I tell you the truth. It is true that Jesus said, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1) but He does not mean that we can never make a judgment based upon truth. He Himself encouraged us to do so (John 7:24). We are commanded to test things (1 Thessalonians 5:21, prophecies in the context), to test the spirits (1 John 4:1, teaching about Christ in the context). We must judge, that is, discern between the true and the false, and our eternal hope depends on knowing and following the truth. So please read on in this Grace & Truth.

There are other articles that we trust you will find profitable. We continue our exposition of Ephesians and complete chapter 1. It is by such consecutive studies that we believe the Bible is best interpreted. We begin a new series from the Old Testament on the Life of David and how to interpret it for ourselves. We also present the first part of a careful examination of the difficult text of Genesis 6:4. There is another much debated question for which Biblical answers are given, this time on Polygamy. Everything must be tested by what all of Scripture says. Last but not least is a teaching on the very practical subject of Baptism. May the Lord richly bless you through His Word! We would be grateful to hear from you about how this issue has been of blessing to you, or any questions you might have arising from its content.

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*So Jesus said... "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,  
and you will know the **truth**, and the **truth** will set you free."  
(John 8:31-32 )*

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the **truth**, and the life. No one  
comes to the Father except through me."  
(John 14:6)*

*"Sanctify them in the **truth**; your word is **truth**."  
(John 17:17)*

# EVERYTHING EXISTS FOR THE CHURCH!

Keith Underhill

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## EPHESIANS 1:22-23

What do many people think of the Christian *church* today? They think it is filled with hypocrites, people who preach one thing and practice another. Of course, there is too much truth in this. In the U.K. the church seems irrelevant with fewer and fewer attending worship, church buildings closing weekly to be taken over as warehouses, garages and even mosques. The largest professing Christian church has had awful sex scandals exposed amongst its leadership. In Kenya the church seems to be growing, yet there is much formality on the one hand, and a great emphasis on entertainment on the other hand. Despite all this, the Bible clearly tells us that the *church* is at the very centre of all God does in the entire creation! God neither acts for the sake of great powers like the United States or China, nor simply for the poor and down-trodden of the world. It is not the G8 or G20, the World Bank or IMF, or the UN that rules the world. It is the *church* that God specially loves, that Christ gave Himself for, and that will be prepared to be with Him in glory (Ephesians 5:25-27). So how important it is to know what the church is, and whether you are really a part of it!

### 1. CHRIST RULES OVER ALL THINGS (1:22a)

Paul has been expressing his prayer for the Ephesian Christians to know the three things of greatest importance for their Christian lives (1:18-19). The third prayer concerns the power that is at work in believers, the power that is nothing less than the resurrection-exaltation power that put Christ in the highest place in the universe, at God's own right hand, for ever. But it is not a place of privilege and authority without doing anything. God has "put all things under His feet" – "put" is the same word translated "submit" (5:21,22,24). A victorious king puts his feet on the neck of his defeated foe to show their total submission (see Joshua 10:24). So Christ has been exalted to make every enemy submit, and the last enemy will be death, but it will also finally submit. Read Psalm 110:1 and 1 Corinthians 15:24-26. No one and nothing will be able to successfully resist Christ so as to come out from under His rule. He will ultimately and totally triumph! How foolish to fight against Christ. Yes, He died in weakness, but He is now in the place of glory and power, and one day He will return in all His divine power and *every* knee shall bow before Him (Philippians 2:9-11).

## 2. CHRIST RULES FOR THE SAKE OF HIS CHURCH (1:22b)

(1) “*and (God) gave Him*” – The emphasis in the words, “and gave Him as head” is on the “Him”, that is, ‘*Him* it is that God gave’, the One He so highly exalted. It seems paradoxical that One who has everything under His feet is ‘given’, but He is the Father’s gracious gift.

(2) “*as head over all things*” – The Father gave Him as “head over all things”. Do not think here of head and body relationships as these have to do with created things (see also Colossians 2:10). “Head” means rule, for Christ an absolute rule, for He is ruler over “all things”. This must include evil and well as good powers. There is so much talk today of evil spirits, of so-called generational curses, as if these things are independent of Christ. How false this is!

(3) “*for the church*” – The further thought here is that all this power is exercised to the advantage of, or to the benefit of the church. Ask an athlete why he is doing certain things and not doing others. You will always get the reply, ‘so that I can win the race’. If you could ask God, ‘Why are you doing this?’ He would always reply, ‘For my beloved church’. This is the answer to all the following questions we might ask. Why did you choose Abraham and take him from Ur to bring him to Canaan? Why did you get the brothers to sell Joseph into slavery in Egypt and to get put in prison there? Why was Saul of Tarsus a witness of the stoning of the first Christian Martyr, Stephen? Why was there persecution at the time of Stephen’s death? Why was Paul in prison in Rome when he might have been free to preach everywhere? And especially, why did Christ come from heaven to suffer and die on a Roman cross? In all that God does He has the benefit of the church in view, and this is how “all things work together for good” (Romans 8:28). Even Job’s sufferings were for good. Our own trials are for good (Romans 5:3-5, James 1:2-4).

(4) *What is this church?* It is certainly not a building; it is not an organization like Trinity Baptist Church; nor is it all who call themselves Christians as opposed say to Muslims, so 75% of Kenyans. The church is made up of a special kind of people, “saints”, those who are holy in the sense that they have been set apart from sin to God; they are “faithful in Christ Jesus” (remember 1:1). Such was the local church in Ephesus to whom Paul was writing. Here the church is not confined to one local church, but refers to all believers, at all times, in all places, what is often called the ‘universal’ church (as in 3:10, 21, 5:23ff.). The church is all those who submit to Christ (5:24), who are loved by Christ (5:25), in order to be made holy (5:27). See a woman who joyfully does whatever a certain man wants, whose needs are all

met by that man, and who presents herself beautifully before him, and I will show you a wife. Does this describe your relationship to Christ? Then you are part of the church. The church is the heavenly gathering around the throne of Christ in which believers now participate.

### 3. **BECAUSE THE CHURCH IS VERY PRECIOUS TO CHRIST** (1:23)

(1) The church is nothing less than “*His body*” (also 4:4,12,16, 5:23,30). How precious is your body to you? It is obviously so precious that you clean it, feed it, protect it, in order to keep it. Christ has indissolubly bound the church to Himself. So what happens to the body reflects upon Him. Therefore He must save those for whom He died; He must keep them and raise them up on the last day. They must be with Him in glory, or He will be ‘body-less’! This is why He exercises His infinite power in their interest. Like it or not, the entire universe is subject to Him because the church is His body.

(2) The church is further described as “*the fullness of Him*”, that is of Christ. Christ fills the church. There are a number of different possible interpretations, but the one I think best fits the context is that Christ Himself is the fullness of the church. This is because the emphasis is laid upon what Christ is to the church. As the glory cloud filled the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exodus 40:34-35), so Christ who is the glory of God fills the church by His Spirit. Where does Christ delight to be and to manifest His glory? Amongst His people. “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matthew 18:20). More amazingly, this One “fills all in all”. He completely fills everything, in every respect and in every way. But He fills the church in a special way He does not fill all other things. Think about it as the difference between a loving husband making known his presence at home, and a major-general on a parade ground. Christ’s glory is not simply His power and His wisdom, but as used in grace for our eternal salvation.

Are you someone who professes to be saved? Then I ask you, how interested are you in Christ’s church? God’s people under the old covenant would groan if away from God’s manifested presence in Jerusalem. If Christ manifests His glorious presence when the local church gathers for worship you should groan if ever you are prevented from being together with them. Is the church then, as we have defined it, the very centre of your life, so that you fit everything else around it? This may demand a radical reordering of your life, but you must do whatever it takes. Is your failure here the reason why you are spiritually weak and not progressing as you ought? If I have a very special function and I invite you as a chief guest and you give some very lame excuse,

will that not tell me something about the way you consider me? If your Saviour delights to be with His people, with you whom He has redeemed at such tremendous cost, do you not delight, as your chief joy, to be with Him? This teaching clearly shows that we should not emphasize the private over the corporate in worship and service. If anything, the corporate is more important.

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## MY TESTIMONY

My name is Gideon Saina. I was raised up in a church-going family by a pious mother. I grew up knowing that to be right with God, I had to fulfil religious obligations such as going to church every Sunday. I later learnt that not only that was enough, but that I also had to obey all the Ten Commandments perfectly. I tried but kept failing every time. I didn't know what the problem was and felt condemned and heavily burdened.

Coming to high school, I went through several "altar calls" seeking to repair my broken state. Well, I wasn't bold enough to step forward. However, I convinced my heart that if I sincerely said the prayer in my seat after the evangelist, I would be saved too. I thought that I was saved by merely acknowledging the fact that Jesus died for me 2000 years ago. I lived seeking to outdo my friends in my "Christianity". Nothing had happened to my heart. In fact, I continued to love the things that God hates. I was a fig tree that produces thorns. My life was marked by hypocrisy. I loved to appear righteous before men, but didn't care what I looked like when I was alone. I was like a whitewashed tomb, which outwardly appear beautiful but within is full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. I loved it when people spoke and thought well of me.

One day, I watched a sermon on YouTube about how a Christian is known by their fruits. This prompted me to examine myself deeply, if I really bore the fruits of the Holy Spirit. The gospel was preached from Isaiah 53. I tried to convince myself that I was still a Christian, but I got a strong conviction that I was still in my sin. I felt remorseful for my deeds. It was as though my garments had been removed to leave me naked with my sins uncovered. Thanks be to God for the evangelist who preached that I needed to repent and believe in Jesus. That it pleased God to bruise Jesus for my iniquity, and that I would be forgiven by believing in Him and His complete work on the cross. I cast all my sins to Christ, by faith and all my burden fell and I clung on to Jesus as my only hope. Indeed, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to His cross I cling. My life would then completely turn around as I began to have a desire to know the word of God and to do His will. It is His grace to me that trained me and continues to train me to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and a godly life in this present age.

As I continue in my journey of faith, I continue to see more of my wretchedness and Christ becomes more precious to me. Indeed I strive to count every gain I have according to the flesh as loss, that I may have the fullness of Christ. As I stand here today, Jesus is all I have, for apart from Him, I am dead. And in Him I now live and walk by faith. I believe that the Lord will uphold me by His grace and mercy and deliver me home, to the eternal life that He has promised all those who have believed in Him. I praise the Lord for the wonderful promises He has given in His Word. I am so thankful for the means of grace He has provided for my spiritual growth – Scriptures, the prayer, the Church and the fellowship of brethren, the Spirit applying them all on us.

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## THE ANOINTING OF DAVID TO BE KING (1 Samuel 16:1-13)

(1) **Why study the life of David?** David lived about 3,000 years ago, in a totally different culture, and he became a king and so was no ordinary person. There are 2 basic reasons, apart from the fact that it is written in the word of God, and all Scripture is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

**First**, David was a true man of God, so an *example* to all believers. In contrast to Saul, God testifies of David: “I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will” (Acts 13:22, see 1 Samuel 13:14). Saul was not willing to submit unconditionally to the declared will of God through His prophet Samuel. He was told to wait 7 days for Samuel to come, but he gave up too soon (1 Samuel 10:8, 13:8ff.). He was told, “Go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey,” but he did not do it exactly as he was commanded (1 Samuel 15). David is a great example of careful, strict obedience to the will of God. God encouraged Jeroboam to be like David in this respect: “Do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did” (1 Kings 11:38, see also 14:8, 15:3-5, etc.). So it is right to use the Old Testament David as an example for us as Christian believers, for this is what the New Testament does (as in Matthew 12:3, Hebrews 11:32, see also 1 Corinthians 10:11).

**Second**, David as the King of Israel, is a *type* of Christ. The circumstances of David’s reign were so ordained by God to be a pattern or type of Christ’s own coming reign. In the same way Adam is expressly called a type of Christ in Romans 5:14, for there are similarities between them that God ordained: they are both representatives, the heads of their respective peoples. David is so much a type of the coming Christ, that Christ is prophesied as if He is David (in Ezekiel 34:23-24), and as if Christ sits on David’s throne (Luke 1:32, Acts 2:30). In the raising up of David to be king in Israel God announces the particular person in all the tribes from which Christ is going to proceed, the Son of David. Therefore, in the life of David there is much to learn about Christ.

## (2) Why David was anointed?

Saul had been chosen as the first king of Israel, and God had done it as an example to the people of what a king should not be like. They had cried for a king, “that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles” (1 Samuel 8:19-20). Saul had been rejected because of his disobedience to the word of God (1 Samuel 15:26). As he grieved over Saul’s terrible condition, Samuel feared for the future of the nation. But God had His own plans in the midst of this darkness. God would not let His people be destroyed so as to frustrate His very own plans! He was actually about to do a glorious thing, totally unforeseen by Samuel. Let us take note that God’s promises will always be accomplished, no matter how hopeless the situation appears to be. Listen to Hannah and pray and praise the Lord (1 Samuel 2:9-10)!

## (3) How David was anointed?

**First**, it was to be done *secretly*. This was probably so as not to provoke the wrath of Saul against Samuel and David. This had the purpose of bestowing gifts upon David so it was not necessary to be public (as it was later in 2 Samuel 2:4 and 5:3). Samuel did not lie when he only spoke of coming to sacrifice. While we must always tell the truth, it is not necessary to tell all the truth. But we must never withhold truth with the intention of deceiving. Here we need to learn to be as wise as serpents.

**Second**, it was the *youngest son* of Jesse who was surprisingly anointed. Israel had already made the mistake of selecting a king on the basis of physical qualities alone (see 1 Samuel 9:2, 10:23). As the youngest, and as the one keeping sheep, David appeared insignificant, yet he was actually excellent. God’s choices are not based on visible outward appearances but on spiritual qualities. We can tell how people look, but God can tell what they really are. In David, God saw a heart attitude of faith and submission to Himself, something that others lacked.

**Third**, the *anointing* was a symbol of his receiving the Holy Spirit in order to carry out the task for which God had chosen him (as with Saul in 1 Samuel 10:9ff.). God not only calls; He also equips. Jesus is called ‘The Christ’ = the anointed One because He received the Spirit to do His work (Matthew 3:16, Acts 10:38). Our Lord commanded His disciples to go and preach throughout the world; and He told them to wait until “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). John relates the anointing that all true Christians have to the teaching work of the Spirit (1 John 2:20,27).

#### (4) Important lessons from the anointing of David

**First**, the *importance of the heart* as compared to the outward appearance (16:7). God always sees through our outward man into our very heart (so 1 Chronicles 28:9, Revelation 2:23). Consider the following 4 aspects of life:

- In human relationships as young people seek a life partner. Do you pay more attention to your character than your outward appearance? Is this how you look at others also? (1 Timothy 2:9, 1 Peter 3:3-4)
- In performing your religious duties. Do you remember that God sees the heart, and that is important to Him, rather than outward actions done and words spoken (Matthew 15:8-9, Simon in Acts 8:21). How often the prophets say that God rejects mere outward obedience even if it is what was commanded (see especially Isaiah 1:10ff.).
- In the church as spiritual leaders are chosen. It is so easy to be impressed by the extravert who captivates with smooth speech, by the paper qualifications. Yet the first mark of a true leader is, he “must be above reproach” (1 Timothy 3:2).
- On the Day of Judgment. God will judge with perfect justice because knows the very depths of the heart (Romans 2:16). So it is not just actions, but words, thought, desires and motives. Are you prepared to face Him on that day with your heart naked before Him? (Hebrews 4:12-13). Has your heart been cleansed from sin by faith? (Acts 15:9)

**Second**, the *importance of the Spirit of God* to enable us to do the will of God. No matter what is the responsibility God has given you to do His Spirit is both necessary and fully able to equip us to do it. So it was in the building of the tabernacle (Exodus 35:31), and for the various Judges (for example Samson, Judges 13:25), and for the prophets. It is especially true as we contemplate our responsibility to be His witnesses among all nations (Acts 1:8). By nature you might consider yourself to be totally unable, but remember that the Spirit of God totally transforms you, as He did with the apostles. How the apostle Peter was changed as a result of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost! Go forth in faith. Have no doubt that the God who chose you to be a Christian gives you all you need to faithfully live out your Christian life. God is not like Pharaoh who commands bricks to be made but does not supply the straw.

**Third**, the *importance of David as a type of Christ*. Where did God find His ideal king, the one after His own heart? In the insignificant town of Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:1, see Micah 5:2), and amongst the shepherds! This is the humble origin we find in *the* anointed One of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was not born in Jerusalem, in the palace of the king, but with the animals in their shed. He was welcomed into the world by “shepherds out in

the field, keeping watch over their flock by night” (Luke 2:8). He did not come to be served, but to be a servant to do the will of God. As to His human nature, He was totally dependent on the Spirit of God, so He was given the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). He learned obedience through the things He suffered, and offered up a perfect sacrifice of Himself to God on our behalf. This is the infinite costliness of salvation (Philippians 2:5-8). This pattern of humiliation and exaltation in God’s servants is seen in Joseph, in Moses, in David, and fully in Christ. It is a pattern for all Christians (Romans 8:17).

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## BAPTIZE THEM PROPERLY

*Murungi Igweta*

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### MATTHEW 28:19-20.

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Baptism is an integral part of disciple-making endeavour. For this reason when the Lord commissioned the disciples to be disciple-makers, he instructed them to be baptizing those who believe in Him. It is with this in mind that I venture to touch on this important church practice. Essentially, I will attempt to answer a few questions.

**What is baptism?** It is the dipping, immersing, submerging or plunging into water (Matthew 3:16; John 3:23) in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, to signify our adoption into Christ, our cleansing from sin, and our commitment to belong to the Lord and to His church. In the Words of the dependable and historic 1689 Baptist Confession, *‘Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be to the person who is baptized - a sign of his fellowship with Christ in His death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into Christ, of remission of sins; and of that person's giving up of himself to God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life’* (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 3:27; Mark 1:4; Acts 22:16). It outwardly marks the entrance into the body of Christ.

**Why baptism?** It might look the silliest thing to do to a carnal eye. Yet it is so simple to obey! It is so important, that the Lord of glory Himself, even Christ was baptized, *‘to fulfil all righteousness’* (Matthew 3:15). Moreover, it is His command and ordinance, and the commandments of the Lord are good, holy and

righteous – saints obey them! No true Christian would disdain or neglect the rule of the Lord who left His glory, gave His life, shed His blood to save him. The apostles obeyed this and at the very inception of the church of Christ, all who believed were baptized and added to the number of believers in His church. Shall we ignore that which our most precious Saviour has set an example? Shall we disobey what the Lord has commanded? If you truly name the name of Christ, then be baptized and be part of the church of Christ. Keith Underhill so well explains the intention of Baptism in his exposition of the Baptist Confession of Faith:

**What is the intention of baptism?** It is both a message from God to the one being baptized, and a response to God by the one being baptized.

- 1) **A sign from God** – God declares, and so assures the one being baptized, that he is united with Christ in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5, Galatians 3:27, Colossians 2:12, see also Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 1:13-16, 10:2), because baptism has the idea of being united with someone in leadership over the person; and he has forgiveness of sins through Christ, symbolized by baptism as a washing with water (Acts 2:38, 22:16). Baptism does not accomplish this, but is an outward sign that this has happened.
- 2) **A commitment by the baptized** – Baptism also symbolizes our saving response to the Gospel, that we have submitted to the demands of the Gospel, in order to live a new life in Christ (Acts 2:38, 1 Peter 3:21). Thus baptism takes on the character of a covenant ceremony between God and the one being baptized<sup>1</sup>.

While baptism is a means of grace, yet it does not and cannot save. Its proper and appointed use cannot be too highly valued. On the other hand, if it is abused to purposes for which it was not given by the Lord as if it were containing in and of itself salvation to man or washing from sins, then it is desecrated as it would encroach on the throne of Christ, the Saviour. The water of baptism must neither be confused with the blood of Christ, nor the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. In effect, there is no place of the so called baptismal regeneration by the Roman Catholics. This truth also crushes to powder the ‘golden calf of reformation’<sup>2</sup> called infant baptism, which is prevalent among our Presbyterian brothers, as well as Lutherans and Anglicans friends.

As a means of grace, it means that as one is baptized *in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. By all means, we should look to God in this ordinance, since it is the idea of Christ, and we must expect from God through it the conveyance of his grace and peace. ‘Baptism is to be revered, but not

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.trinity.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/chapter-29.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Paul Washer, Ten Indictments Against the Church

idolized. It is to be used as means, but not rested in as an end. No one is to imagine himself the better, simply because he has attended on any ordinance, baptism included<sup>3</sup>.

**Who is eligible for baptism?** Of course, we should just learn from the pages of Scriptures how to rightly administer baptism, to the right people (true believers) at the right time and age (definitely not at infancy, as such cannot clearly and publicly profess faith in Christ. In quoting the Baptist Confession of Faith, *Those who actually profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects for this ordinance* (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12; 36,37; 2:43; 18:8).

**Where and in what context should baptism be administered?** Can Christian baptism be conducted as a private event, outside of the oversight of a local visible church? Who should administer the sacrament or ordinance of baptism? Can it be administered by any person, by any baptized Christian, or must it be administered only by a minister who has been set apart to office in the church? These are ancient and important ecclesiological questions, which are being raised anew in our day. However, in answering them, we should evaluate the evidence of Scripture in terms of instruction and example.

A close and thorough examination of the New Testament evidence clearly indicates that baptism should only be administered within the context of the local church and that baptism should only be properly administered by the church's officers. In obedience to the Great Commission cited above. After all, these instructions were especially given to them as the leaders and representatives of the church.

The context of Acts indicates that the converts at Pentecost were baptized by Peter and the other apostles (Acts 2:38-43). The first Samaritan converts were apparently baptized by Philip who had preached the gospel to them (Acts 8:12). Philip was one of the seven men of good repute in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). Luke notes specifically that the Ethiopian Eunuch was baptized by Philip (Acts 8:36-38). Saul (Paul) was ostensibly baptized by Ananias, who, though he is only overtly described as a "disciple" (Acts 9:10-18).

Cornelius and the other converts at Caesarea seem to have been baptized by the apostle Peter aided by the six men from the church at Joppa (most likely including at least some of the church's officers) who accompanied him (Acts 10:23, 44-48; 11:12-17). Paul and Silas apparently baptized Lydia, the Philippian jailer, and the converted members of his household (Acts 16:14-15, 31-33). Paul also apparently baptized Crispus and the other converts at Corinth (Acts 18:5-8; cf. also 1

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae*

Corinthians 1:14, 16 where Paul says he baptized only Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanus in Corinth), as well as the twelve disciples at Ephesus (Acts 19:5).

A survey of Acts reveals that there is not a single explicit narrative description of a believer being baptized by anyone other than a church officer. The Great Commission specifies duties, for the performance of which the apostles were first of all to provide. One of these was the administration of baptism. They were commanded, not to make disciples and teach them the baptism doctrine or the duty of being baptized; but to make disciples and actually baptize them. The administration of the rite was in their care; and, where they could not personally perform it, it was made their duty to provide for its performance by delegation. Therefore the administration was not designed to be left to any one whom the candidate might select or prefer. Rather, it is the duty of the pastors under whose oversight he is to provide. (However, in my humble opinion, any man who can be delegated by the elders of a local church to preach could also be fit to baptize. Surely we mustn't put a higher premium on baptism than preaching)

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## COMMON QUESTION NO. 6

### MAY A CHRISTIAN BE A POLYGAMIST?

*Keith Underhill*

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Polygamy is a widespread traditional practice in Kenya. A man feels he is someone if he has more than one wife. It is a status symbol. There have been a variety of attitudes in the professing Christian Churches. At one extreme has been the demand for the polygamous man to send away all wives but the first if he is going to be accepted as a Christian, i.e. be baptized and become a full church member. At the other extreme Independent African Churches have been formed with the express purpose of allowing such traditions as polygamy in the church.

1. **Polygamy was practised in the Old Testament.** Many men had more than one wife: for example, Lamech had two (Genesis 4:23), Esau had three (26:34, 28:9), Jacob had two sisters as wives and had children with their maids, Gideon had many (Judges 8:29), Elkanah had two (1 Samuel 1:2), David had six (2 Samuel 3:2-5) and then added more (2 Samuel 5:13), Solomon incredibly had 700 (1 Kings 11:3). Not all of these were wicked men. Yet in many cases the rivalry between wives and their offspring is clearly revealed, as with Elkanah's and in David's household. Solomon multiplied wives to a ridiculous level against the

clear command of God (Deuteronomy 17:17). Note that this command for future kings not to acquire many wives was not a law against polygamy itself.

2. **Polygamy was not openly condemned, as was adultery.** David was not condemned for having more than one wife (the Bible only reports the fact that he did), but for committing adultery with the wife of another man, Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:7-8). So it seems that polygamy was not considered to be an adulterous relationship. Abraham is nowhere condemned for his relationship with Hagar, for example. That does not make what he did right, but it shows it was not an occasion for the pouring out of God's judgment. An Israelite with two or more wives was not considered as one who had fallen from the faith, as was an adulterer.

3. **It is possible that the Law of Moses even allowed/tolerated polygamy, as it did divorce.**

➤ There are passages that may refer to a polygamous situation (Exodus 21:9-10, Leviticus 18:18, Deuteronomy 21:15-17). However, there are other possible explanations for these passages. For example, we do not have to assume that "if a man has two wives" it must mean that he had them at the same time; alternatively it could mean he had them one after the other.

➤ The law of levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5-10) would seem to sanction polygamy, at least in principle if the husband's brother was already married. It is possible that Boaz was already married when he also took Ruth as a wife. These things would put polygamy in an analogous position with divorce.

➤ Jesus says that "because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Matthew 19:8). Therefore at best polygamy was allowed or tolerated, as was divorce, although it never was God's purpose for marriage.

4. **Monogamy is the standard for marriage in both Testaments.** From the beginning, from the creation, it is quite clear that marriage is to be between one man and one woman as God brought one woman to one man and united them (Genesis 2:21-23). The definition of marriage that 'the man and his wife become one flesh' (2:24) further confirms monogamy. Monogamy is often just assumed (Deuteronomy 28:54,56, Psalm 128:3, Jeremiah 5:8, 6:11). Proverbs is emphatic about the close relationship with one's wife (5:15-21, 18:22, 31:10-31). Malachi complains about unfaithfulness to the wife of one's youth (2:14). The teaching of Jesus about divorce also forbids polygamy as it goes back to creation (for example, Matthew 19:3-9). 1 Corinthians assumes monogamy (7:1-2). Jesus has only one bride, the church (Ephesians 5:25-27)!

5. **A church leader cannot be a polygamist.** In the qualifications for an Overseer (Elder/Pastor) or a Deacon, he must be “the husband of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:2,12). This does not mean that he must be a married man, but that if he is married he must only have one wife. [Similarly, there is a further qualification that he must keep “his children submissive” (3:4). This does not mean that he must have children or else he cannot be an overseer. It is assumed that ordinarily men are married and have children.] This implies that at least some Christians were married to more than one wife. Please note that apart from the qualification to be “able to teach” (3:2) the qualifications of verses 2-5 ought to be true of *every* Christian. Therefore it is the will of God that if a man is married, as with a church leader, he be the husband of only one wife. All Christians ought to have all the marks listed, but an Overseer **must** have them otherwise he is disqualified from being an Overseer. Therefore all married Christian men ought to be the husbands of just one wife and no more.

6. **May a polygamist be baptized and become a full church member?** As with divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1-4, and Matthew 19:7-8), polygamy was also tolerated in the Old Testament. Again, as with divorce it is *not* to be tolerated in the church. Any Christian who takes an additional wife ought to be put out of fellowship until there is clear repentance. But what about those who simply followed their culture and became polygamous *before* they became Christians? Must they put away all their wives except the first before they can be baptized and become church members? We believe that this is not a very Christian course of action. In traditional society the woman has little say in who she marries, or whether she becomes a second or third wife. For the husband then to put her away (with her children) would in so many cases to put her in grave hardship. Leaving such a woman, and the children, destitute, would appear to be a worse evil than the polygamous relationship. We see polygamy in such cases as analogous to the Old Testament situation. So if a man who is converted while in a polygamous marriage, or a women who is part of a polygamous marriage, is converted, he/she ought to be baptized as a genuine Christian, and have all the rights of a church member. But in order to make it quite clear that polygamy is not being condoned, two things should be done at the time such are admitted as members:

- Both the polygamous man and woman must publicly confess before the church members that they know polygamy is not the will of God and that they promise not to add another wife (the man) or not to enter as a multiple wife in another home (should her present husband die).
- The polygamous man must assure the church that while he remains polygamous he will never seek office in the church (Overseer or Deacon).

The Pope recently visited Kenya. For some the excitement hasn't faded. Before he arrived, Bishop Philip Anyolo, chairman of the Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, called on Kenyans to spiritually prepare for Pope Francis' visit and "take this visitation as a wonderful gift for the country."<sup>1</sup> By the bishop's call, Kenyans were told we needed to prepare spiritually for the Pope's visit.

There is no question that we need to assume, according to such a high call to the country, that the Pope is very important. Who, then, is the Pope?

There's more to who the Pope is than meets the eye. For the majority of people, what meets the eye is a frail, Caucasian, lovable, greying man dressed in all white, leaning on a golden staff, probably extending a frail arm to touch a little child lifted hoisted in his direction by a woman in the surrounding crowd. He is the man who holds what is often assumed to be the highest office amongst Christians.

The word 'pope' comes from the Latin 'papa', which means 'father'. According to the 'Catechism of the Catholic Church', approved by Pope John Paul II in 1992,

*"The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful ... For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered."* (CCC 882)

Based on this teaching, when Pope Francis came to Kenya or sits in the Vatican, he is

1. Peter's successor
2. The perpetual (unending) and visible source and foundation of the unity of ...the whole company of the faithful (i.e. all Christians)
3. The one who sits in office as the Vicar (sitting representative) of Christ
4. The pastor of the entire Church
5. One with full, supreme and universal powers over the whole church
6. One who can always exercise this power unhindered (i.e. he is sovereign over the church).

## The argument

For a non-Roman Catholic, these statements already pose serious problems. However, we need to ask *why* Roman Catholicism believes and teaches these things about the Pope. What is the basis for such claims? From the statement quoted above, we can glean that they believe these things were true about Peter, and so are true of all his successors, the Popes. The argument stands on Peter's shoulders.

*“The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the “rock” of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock. “The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head.” This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church’s very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.”* (CCC 881)

Peter's office is *“continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope”*. If Peter was not a Pope there wouldn't be Popes today, is the argument. The current Pope simply 'continues' what was began in Peter, and by virtue of his sitting on Peter's seat, he is everything that Peter was, and hence the mandates we read of in the definition of the Pope, as we saw in the first quotation above.

We must bring these basic ideas and suppositions under the searching light of Scripture. Three assumptions naturally arise from what we've seen.

- Peter was the first head of the first church (and of all the churches thereafter), and after his death and was succeeded by someone else, who was succeeded by another, until Pope Francis in 2016. Rome is supposed to have been the central point of his government over the churches.
- Peter, ruling the churches from Rome, had special authority over the whole church (and the person inheriting Peter's office would also inherit these responsibilities and privileges).
- Jesus instituted a position of leadership/authority in the structure of the church, and so the church would always be headed by the person who occupies this office, Peter being its first occupant.

Are these assumptions true? Are they in agreement with or opposition to clear Biblical teaching? To answer we will ask six questions.

### **1. Was Rome the ruling centre of the churches?**

A survey of the book of Acts shows us that the spread of the gospel spread, according to the words of Christ, from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria to the rest of the world. Jerusalem, as the first church and the one in which the Apostles were members, was the first 'centre' of the churches. The young churches

recognised this privilege the church in Jerusalem had, and even for a while looked to Jerusalem for leadership (see, for example, the ‘the Jerusalem council’ in Acts 15). The New Testament never shows that the centrality shifted to Rome. In fact, there is less and less of a ‘central’ church; the Jerusalem church actually loses prominence as the younger churches are strengthened by the tireless work of apostles like Paul, and become more mature. We later read of Paul and Barnabas being sent from Antioch, and in Revelation we read of 7 churches, none of which is [in] Rome.

The prominence of Rome as a centre of Christianity or ecclesiastical authority was not known amongst these early churches, even as the churches grew and spread throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. It was not until over 300 years later, that a bishop of Rome, Damasus (366 AD), assumed upon himself supremacy over other bishops. This was, in fact, for political, rather than religious reasons. Gregory ‘the Great,’ later (590 AD) solidified the Papacy politically. But ‘The papacy as we know it today, claiming to be the ‘Vicar of Christ’ on earth, came to its maturity only in the Middle Ages, in the reign of pope Innocent III (1198-1216)<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. Was Peter the first bishop/ruler of the churches?**

We have seen that if one church were to have any authority over other churches in these early years, it would have been the Jerusalem church. Yet it was James and not Peter, who was its pastor. Peter was not even an elder there (15:6-7). Clearly the Jerusalem church, where the apostles were, did not recognise a special right to leadership he may have had over them.

We have also seen that Rome was not a recognised centre of Christendom in the early church. The claim that Peter ruled the churches from there has no Biblical and/or historical evidence.

Peter himself doesn’t mention this in any of his two letters in the New Testament. Definitely Peter was an elder (the same office as ‘bishop’ or ‘pastor/shepherd’), as we see in 1 Peter 5:1. He calls himself a ‘fellow-elder’ with the elders in the churches he writes to. He does not identify himself as an elder over them. The only elder over elders that he affirms is our great Lord Jesus Christ, whom he calls ‘the chief Shepherd’ (v. 4).

## **3. Was Peter a bishop in Rome?**

Not only is there no evidence that the churches were ruled/governed from a central church in Rome, there is no evidence that Peter was actually a pastor of such a church.

It is very interesting in this discussion to notice that when Paul, a man who would never pass an opportunity to acknowledge fellow Christians, towards the end of his life writes to the church in Rome, he makes no mention of Peter who apparently would have been the pastor there; and Paul dedicates almost a whole chapter to greetings!

Though both Paul and Peter are believed to have been beheaded in Rome (Nero, who led the persecution of Christians under which these 2 great apostles died, was based in Rome), there is no statement in Scripture of Peter having been the pastor in the church there.

#### **4. Did Peter actually have these Papal responsibilities over the churches of his day?**

If Peter had a great Papal authority over the church, one wonders how come the churches and the authors of the New Testament do not give any prominence to such an office. The believers did not treat Peter in a special way or recognise him as their big man.

In fact in Galatians 2:11, Paul opposed Peter ‘to his face, because he stood condemned’, when Peter sinned. Clearly Peter had no Papal infallibility at this point, and Paul does not shield him from rebuke, but writes to the whole Galatian church about it, albeit with love and respect.

Luke, tracing the story of the beginnings and spread of Christianity in the books of Luke and Acts, does not focus on Peter. Despite his historical detailing, he never says Peter was the leader or Pope over the others. Peter also reports to the elders in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1f) the wonders of God’s work, just as did others like Paul. In fact, Peter is not even mentioned beyond chapter 15 in Acts. Instead we are given the story of Paul, who furthers the spread of Christianity beyond Jerusalem.

Peter’s prominence over the 12 disciples is also not acknowledged. The opposite is true. After the famous statement, (‘Thou art Peter, on this rock I shall build my church’), which we shall consider shortly, there arose a debate amongst the disciples, concerning who amongst them ‘was to be regarded as the greatest’ (Lk. 22:24). Christ does not respond by confirming Peter as the supreme apostle. He reminded them to all be servants.

#### **5. Was there a special office instituted by Christ, by which the church would be led which was then occupied by Peter?**

From what we have seen so far, the answer is a simple ‘No’. There is no such office/position of authority over the church, acknowledged in the Bible. How strange that the Bible would teach, in two different books, about the two-fold

offices of elder/bishop/teacher and deacon, yet be totally silent about the papacy, which should be the highest office over all the churches of Christ.

One may here ask about Matthew 16:13-19, which seems to suggest that Peter was made prominent over the whole church. With a brief exposition of this passage, we shall conclude this article on who the Pope is and whether the claims made about his position are Biblical claims.

## 6. What about Matthew 16:13-19?

“...You are Peter, upon this rock I will build my church...”

Before Jesus said this statement, He had just asked his disciples the most important question of His ministry – a question of His identity. ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ They reported to Him the misunderstandings people had of Him. Some said He is Elijah, others John the Baptist, Jeremiah, etc. (At this point we may remember the religion that is only willing to acknowledge him as a prophet but not as God). He then turned the question to them. “But who do you say I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). Peter is commended for this confession, and Christ reveals that it is by the power of God the Father, who is in heaven, that anyone can realise what Peter and the disciples have realised. “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you,” the Lord says.

‘And I tell you’, the Lord continues, ‘you are Peter...’ When the Lord says ‘You are Peter’, he is not teaching Peter his name. He is pointing to the meaning of Peter’s name, because of what he wants to say next that relates to the meaning of ‘Peter’. “You are Peter (*petros*) and on this rock (*petra*) I will build my church. The names sound the same and allude to one another. However, *they are not the exact same name*. ‘Peter’ (*petros*) is a masculine noun, referring to a piece of rock, while rock (*petra*) is a feminine variant of the same noun as *petros* (‘Peter’), but now refers to a mass of rock.

It is not upon Peter that the Lord is building His church. Peter is not the rock on which the church is built. He doesn’t say “and on you I will build my church”. The rest of Scripture clearly shows that Christ Himself is the rock upon which the church is built (Ephesians 2:20; Acts 4:11; Isaiah 28:16). Not Peter. The apostle Paul says: ““For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). In 1 Peter 2:4-8, Peter himself acknowledges that there two types of stones – the living stone that is the cornerstone, and other living stones, i.e. Christ and the rest of the church. He doesn’t see himself as a special stone on which the church is built.

What then does the Lord mean? The answer to this is Ephesians 2:20. We are told there that the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and

prophets”, referring to the doctrine of the apostles and prophets (compare with 1 Corinthians 3:11), “with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone...” The rock on which Christ builds his church is the teaching about Himself. This teaching is precisely in the statement that Peter had just made before Christ said these words to him: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." This is the rock upon which the church is built.

The fact that Christ is not giving Peter as an individual any special office here is also confirmed by the words He says next: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," a promise he shows to belong to the whole church later in Matthew 18:18. Peter is a rock, just as the rest of the church are. We conclude then that in this statement in Matthew 16, he is speaking to Peter representatively, rather than limiting his statements to Peter as an individual.

## Conclusion

We have shown that the Pope has absolutely no relationship to Peter. To say, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, that “*The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the “rock” of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock,*” is simply not true, according to the testimony of Scripture as we’ve seen above. Since this is made the basis for the Pope’s claims to universal authority over the churches, we can clearly see that the office of the Papacy has no Biblical warrant. It is unbiblical. The Papacy should not be acknowledged over the church of Christ. The Pope cannot say “these claims of universal authority are true of me because they were true of Peter, and I sit on Peter’s seat”. Such claims were never true of Peter himself, and Peter never left any special seat to be occupied by men after him. The Shepherd of the whole flock remains **Christ alone**.

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1. N.R Needham, 2000 Years of Christ’s Power, Part One, p. 377

Christ is the Head of the church, because it is He who died for the church (Ephesians 5:25), and who is building the church (Matthew 16:18).

*Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour  
(Ephesians 5:23)*

*And he is the head of the body, the church (Colossians 1:18)*

# MEANING OF “SONS OF GOD” IN GENESIS 6:4

*Barnabas Olare*

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[Barnabas Olare is a Pastor in Mombasa. He wrote this piece on the interpretation of the words “sons of God” as part of his training in the Pastoral Theological Course of Trinity Baptist Church, Nairobi. We present it here as an excellent example of how the Bible should be interpreted. We trust you will greatly benefit from it, and welcome your comments.]

Three main views have been suggested on this phrase. We shall examine each of them to see which one best agrees with the context and the teaching of the rest of scripture.

## 1. The “sons of God” are angels

This view has been held widely and it is easy to jump to this conclusion on first reading the text. It has been supported by the following two arguments:

- The phrase is used in several other places to mean angels, such as Job 1:6, 2:1 and 38:7.
- Proponents of this view believe that 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6-7 refer to this event in Genesis 6:2. The judgments on the angels referred to is believed to be as a result of the sexual relations they had with the human race.

## Analyzing the view

### (1) Context of Genesis 6:4

A number of contextual considerations make this view quite untenable. The first is that angels are not the subject in the wider or even immediate context. Rather the context is about man and his degeneration into pervasive sin. In fact up to this point in scripture no mention has made of angels. It is *man* who became the pinnacle of creation in 1:26-28; it is God’s dealings with him that dominate Genesis 2; it is his fall which is the central point in Genesis 3; it is his moral degeneration that is taken up in Genesis 4, where he commits murder, and breaks God’s order for marriage; it is he who suffers the consequences of sin as every human life ends in death throughout Genesis 5 even as he multiplies.

It is to be noted too that it is against man that judgment is pronounced for the wrongdoing of 6:2. This means that he is the principle offender and therefore the rightful recipient of judgment. It would go against the context if the “sons of God”, who were the initiators of the evil for which judgment came, were to be angels. Then there is no judgment declared on the said angels, as only the human race suffers the consequences of the misdeed whose initiator was

someone else. In Genesis 3 both Satan (the serpent) who initiated the sin and the first couple came under judgment, but clearly the former's was more severe and without mitigation (3:14-15) as he was the initiator of the wrongdoing.

## (2) Analogy of scripture

It is the clear teaching of scripture that angels, though they occasionally assume human form, are incorporeal beings. There is no evidence anywhere in scripture of their being capable of sexual relations or marriage either among themselves or with men. In fact Christ is very categorical that angels do not marry (Matthew 22:30). In these verses our Lord was specifically addressing Himself to the question of marriage in the afterlife; He states clearly that angels do not marry and when we get to heaven we shall be like them with regard to marriage. Since Genesis 6:2 says that these "sons of God" married, it would go against what Christ taught about angels if "our angels" here were to marry.

Admitting this view would suggest that there was a second fall of angelic creatures; 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6-7 are used to suggest this. On these two passages it is enough to say that the specific sin of Genesis 6 is not mentioned as the cause of the punishment of the angels referred to in them. Jude 6 charges them with not staying "within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling", which is consistent with the attitude of Satan and his angels when they fell from glory at the first. The sexual sin in Jude 7 is charged on Sodom and Gomorrah but not on the angels ("likewise" may well refer to the surrounding cities that did as Sodom and Gomorrah). 2 Peter 2:4 only mentions that they sinned without specifying the sin committed. So the connection of these verses to Genesis 6:1-4 to suggest a second fall of members of the angelic order is therefore speculative and without warrant.

As regards the use of the phrase in Job 1:6 and 2:1, it should be noticed that the antithesis there is between the "sons of God" and Satan. It is not a contrast of constitutional nature as both angels and Satan are spiritual beings, but of moral nature angels being righteous and Satan evil. As such these verses cannot be used to infer a contrast of constitutional natures in Genesis 6:2 unless the context there clearly supports such a scheme.

## **Conclusion**

It is my view that although the phrase may and does in other instances refer to angels, the general teaching of scripture on angels and the context in which Genesis 6:2 appears render it unlikely that it is used in such a sense here.

## 2. The “sons of God” are a class of rulers as opposed to commoners

This view holds that the “sons of God” were members of the ruling class or magistrates within the human race, and that the daughters of men refer to daughters of commoners and that the sin here consisted in their indiscriminate marriage relationship.

While there is merit in ascribing the phrase to magistrates and rulers or other aristocratic class, as divinity is sometimes ascribed to this class of people (see Psalm 82:1,6), this view is rendered invalid by the following considerations:

First, contextually, this royalty/commoner distinction is nowhere to be found until Nimrod in Genesis 10:9 and so “sons of God” as some kind of royalty or ruling class does not in my view fit in the context.

Secondly, comparing with the rest of scripture, there is no evidence anywhere in scripture that there was divine sanction against such intermarriage between rulers and common people as would warrant the severe judgment that resulted from the union of the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men”. Such sanctions in scripture have always only applied to relations between God’s covenant people and unbelievers. It is my view that the view that “sons of God” refers to some ruling order of men is fatally injured by the above two considerations.

## 3. The “sons of God” are the godly line of Seth’s descendants

This view holds that the phrase “sons of God” refers to the descendants of godly Seth as opposed to those of ungodly Cain. It believes it was this mingling which caused a blurring of lines between the righteous and the unrighteous leading to the earth being overrun by evil as a result of the influence of the latter on the former hence the outbreak of God’s wrath on all the earth.

This is the view that we adopt and we shall explain why:

### **Hermeneutical considerations:**

(1) Word study of the phrase “*bene-ha ‘elohim*” (sons of God)

The Hebrew for “son” is ‘*ben*’ and has a very wide meaning. The scriptures’ use of “son” takes that same pattern. The senses of the word in scripture include:

- The general and natural meaning which is a male offspring of another either directly or indirectly. For example, David is the son of Jesse being directly biologically fathered by Jesse, but Jesus is the son of David not because David directly fathered Him but He came from the line of David as His forefather.

- A “son of” maybe one who is dominated by something, say sin or the devil, or whose behaviour bears the character or traits of something. For example, the sons of Eli the priest, because of the dominance of evil in them, are called “sons of belial” (literally, 1 Samuel 2:12, KJV.). Verse 17 summarizes their evil conduct thus, “the sin of the young men was very great in the sight of the LORD, for the men treated the offering of the LORD with contempt”.
- It also means one who originates from or belongs to something. For example, in Psalm 147:13 the citizens of Jerusalem are called “children” of that city.
- Adam is called the “son of God”, being directly originated from God, there being no intermediate progenitor between him and God (Luke 3:38). In this sense, Adam of all humans is God’s son in a way in which no other human is or can be.
- Jesus Christ is THE Son of God, being so by virtue of His being eternally begotten to the Father in the triune existence. For obvious reasons, “son of God” in this sense applies exclusively to Christ who is clearly designated singularly and emphatically God’s “only Son” (John 1:14,18, 3:16, Hebrews 11:17, 1 John 4:9).

From the above, we can deduce that “son of” can be used to define a relationship sustained by one to another by origin (birth, creation), ownership, affinity of nature or character. “Sons of God” therefore must mean a group that sustains a relationship with God in one or several of the possible ways contemplated above.

*(to be continued in Grace & Truth 126)*

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### **Interpreting the Old Testament**

We have had two articles on the Old Testament in this issue of Grace & Truth. So many of the errors in the church are because of a wrong interpretation of the Old Testament. Think of how some preachers so often appeal to the Old Testament, and especially the prophetic sections which are full of symbolic language. But the Old Testament is not history written before time, nor is it just a book of morals. It is primarily about **Jesus Christ**, and if we do not see Him there then we have failed to properly understand. It is written of our Lord Himself:

*And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things **concerning himself**. (Luke 24:25-27, see 44-47)*

## Subscription

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tbc\_kenya@ymail.com

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P.O. Box 57907 00200 NAIROBI.

**Chief Editor:**  
Keith Underhill

**Editor:**  
John Muketha

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Thelims Systems

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P.O. Box 57907 00200 NAIROBI.  
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**E-mail: [trinityboffice@gmail.com](mailto:trinityboffice@gmail.com)**  
**Website: [www.trinity.or.ke](http://www.trinity.or.ke)**

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**GRACE & TRUTH MAGAZINE**  
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