

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

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NO. 1

ITEMS OF INTEREST

By *BILLY D. DICKINSON*

It has been a while since I've written an article under the above title. Here lately, however, I've read some things that are very revealing because they expose a false doctrine for what it is. The following “items” demonstrate that some brethren's view of grace is a perverted one, even reminiscent of how some in Jude's day were “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (verse 4). When it is argued that God's grace is a license to live an ungodly life or to go “beyond the things which are written” (1 Cor. 4:6/ ASV), surely a perversion of the truth has taken place!

Some who should know better are claiming that we don't preach God's grace in the churches of Christ. The charge is grossly unfair, a shameful attack against the Lord's people, and is easily demonstrated to be false. No, we don't proclaim the cheap, denominational version of grace, but that should not be confused with “the true grace of God wherein ye stand” (1 Pet. 5:12). Lynwood Smith, for example, had a sermon on the cross that would literally bring tears to your eyes. Wasn't that a proclamation of God's grace? Sure it was (Heb. 2:9)! Also, when the sinner is told of his need of Christ's blood and how to receive the remission of sins, the gospel is being preached just like it was in the first century (Acts 2:38).

If we present “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24) the way that Peter did on the day of Pentecost, people will be led to be baptized “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:41). Shame on the preacher who claims to be a champion of grace while he won't preach on all the things that are divinely linked with the generous grace of God! While we expect such from denominational preachers, men who have had an association with the Lord's church should know better. We are ready now to look at some “items of interest” that demonstrate how a perverted view of grace leads to all kinds of error:

“OLD GUS”

The first item comes from the pen of Leroy Garrett. In a “newsletter” sent out by another brother, the following is found: “I told my own favorite story, which was about Carl [Ketcherside] and ‘old Gus’ at the Cornerstone, an inner-city ministry in St. Louis where Carl ministered the last years of his life, serving street people with food, clothing, and fellowship. Gus was a homeless wino whose tragic story

as a loser touched Carl's heart. Carl tried to rescue Gus by pointing him to Jesus, but Gus would say that his case was hopeless, that he had tried everything, including religion, and that he was destined to die as a drunk. And so it was. One morning he was found dead in an alley, frozen to death drunk. As Carl told that story at one of our last meetings together, he paused and, as if talking to himself, said, ‘I wonder what God will do with old Gus.’ Afterward I put an arm around him and said, ‘Carl, when I first knew you, you knew exactly what God would do with that old drunk. But now you're not so sure.’ When our hearts are touched by God's grace, our judgments are tempered.”

After reading what Leroy Garrett wrote, get ready now to read the following comment from the author of the newsletter: “Beautiful, Leroy. True, we don't know for certain what God will do with old Gus, but we do know His grace is deeper than the deepest ocean and higher than the highest star. So, yes, old Gus has a chance! God may just ‘dry him out’ and give him a voice with the heavenly choir. Then old Gus will be singing, not drinking.” There you have it! According to this perverted view of grace, a man can reject the Lord Jesus Christ and “die as a drunk,” but he still has a hope of going to heaven.

Certainly it is a noble thing to be compassionate and to try to help someone like Gus, so that part of the story is commendable. But where do we get the right to imply that such a one might go to heaven? If a preacher is serious about leading sinners to repentance (Acts 17:30), why would he want to leave an impression like that? The simple answer is that their perverted view of grace has led them to question what they once knew to be true (even as Leroy Garrett admitted). Although these men want to lecture us on the subject of grace, claiming that they have a deeper understanding of it than we do, the truth is that they know very little about grace as it is presented in the Scriptures.

Consider these simple facts: (1) God's grace to save is found in Christ (2 Tim. 2:1; Rom. 3:24)- If we reject Jesus and His gospel, we have rejected the means of our salvation, (2) God's grace teaches us that we should live righteous and holy lives (Tit. 2:11-12)- It is not a license to live as we please without consequences, and (3) Paul declared that “the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10)- He specifically applied this to “drunkards.” A view of grace that compels a man to climb out on a limb and

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Editorial

“WHERE TWO OR THREE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER...” PART 2

By: DON L. KING

Last month, we wrote about the passages in Matthew 18: 15-20. We promised to write more this month and so we want to notice some difficulties involved when Matthew 18:20 is used as a proof text for worshiping away from an established assembly. In all fairness to our brethren, we are happy to say this is rarely done now. We have learned better and God be thanked for that.

Most of us realize we are not to use multiple cups or loaves in an assembly. Matthew 26:26, 27; Mark 14: 22, 23; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 1 Corinthians 11: 23-29 furnishes the pattern for observing the Lord ‘s Supper. All of these scriptures show the use of one loaf and one cup and we follow that pattern today. When brethren leave an assembly to go on vacation and believe they may worship wherever they happen to be on the Lord’s Day, they create a very serious situation. In leaving an established assembly where an established congregation worships every Lord’s Day they have in effect divided their home assembly. Part of the assembly is where it always worships but another part is away and worshiping on its own. Those who are on vacation have not established a new congregation because they do not intend to stay there by the lake, river, or seaside, etc. In fact, they may move on as soon as their “worship” is completed. The next Lord’s Day there will be no worship in that place at all. Anyone who might have decided to assemble with them the next Sunday will be disappointed if they come there. What has happened? The home assembly had one loaf and one cup just as the Scriptures prescribe but part of their assembly is away, not part of any other assembly and they also have one loaf and one cup. Let us pose a question: If that is Biblical, could that family move closer home next Sunday and worship on their own again? If you answer yes, could they come even nearer the next Lord’s Day and once again worship on their own? If you answer yes, could they then come into the parking lot beside the church building at home and once again hold their own service? Most would answer “no,” but we say if not why not. The location would not matter would it? If this can be scripturally done 500 miles away, it can be done next door to the church house. In effect, the church has been divided with part meeting with one loaf and cup and another part doing the same. Remember, there has been no establishment of another congregation. If that were offered as an excuse, it is a poor one because surely we need to allow more than a Sunday or two for the “new congregation” to make it. No, brethren who do such things have no intention of establishing anything at all! They merely hold a service as a convenience before they return home. They know when they are returning before they leave. We may find ample Scripture for members becoming part of another assembly. The apostles often did that as did other members in Bible

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THE QUERIST COLUMN

By RONNY F. WADE

Question: Would you please comment on the necessity of good edifying lessons as opposed to long boring lessons that fail to teach and encourage?

Answer: The teaching or instruction given and received in church assemblies is, in many ways, the life blood of the congregation. We are informed in Acts 2:42 that the newly converted Christians “continued in the teaching of the apostles.” We have in the New Testament scriptures a number of recorded sermons such as Peter’s memorable address in Acts 2 and Paul’s teaching in Acts 24 and 26. In Colossians 4:16 Paul writes “Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.” This indicates that when churches assembled, at least part of the teaching consisted of reading the inspired epistles written by Paul. The length of a sermon is not nearly as important as its content. A good fifteen minute lesson is much more edifying and encouraging than a forty-five minute ramble that teaches little. If we are correct in assuming that the teaching service is, in many ways, the lifeblood of the church, then special care must be given to the preparation and delivery of sermons. No congregation should be subjected to an ill prepared teacher delivering an ill prepared lesson. For someone to say “I haven’t had time to study, but will do the best I can” is inexcusable. The Hebrew writer in chapter 5:12 instructs “for though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” The import of the writer is clear. Those under consideration should have grown and developed to the point that they could successfully teach others. But instead they needed to be taught the elementary principles of the gospel themselves. Unfortunately today, many times, the person doing the teaching, actually needs to be taught. Every man in the church is not necessarily qualified to teach in the public assemblies of the church, nor should they be encouraged to do so. We need good teachers who study and prepare themselves for the important task of instructing the church. How long should the lesson be? That depends on a number of things, such as the ability of the speaker, the content of the lesson, and the audience assembled. The scriptures set no time limit, but common sense does. If the purpose of public teaching is the instruction of the hearers, and it is, then when the speaker loses the audience because of time, content, or incompetent delivery the sermon is too long. What good does it do for a man to preach for an hour when he lost the audience thirty minutes earlier?

Question: Could you baptize a woman if she was living with a man to whom she was not married? What if she dies soon afterward?

Answer: Repentance is a requisite for baptism. If I knew that the woman was living with a man to whom she was not married, I would instruct her that she could not continue in that state after she was baptized. If she realized such a state was sinful and agreed that she would no longer continue in it, then I would baptize her. If she told me that she had no intention of giving up her live in mate, then I would not baptize her, and explain why. If she died soon after and at the time was continuing in sin, then she would have to answer to God for her sins. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 800337 LaGrange, GA 30240 or rf Wade@charter.net)

Pages From The Past

BUILDING A CHRISTIAN HOME

By HOMER A. GAY

Due to several requests, we have agreed to publish once again this series of articles first written in 1946 in Old Paths Advocate. The country wit and wisdom is obvious throughout the twelve articles. Lord willing we will publish one a month. We are sure you will enjoy reading from his able pen. DLK

“A PLACE TO CALL HOME”

A house does not always mean a home, and yet there must be something, some place that we think of as home. I realize that I may be “old fashioned,” but I believe that before a couple marry they should make some kind of arrangement for some place to live to themselves. Many marriages have gone on the rocks because the young folks did not consider God’s words to “Leave father and mother” and cleave to one another, and moved in on the old folks.

Young folks will have to get adjusted and acquainted after they marry and they need to be off to themselves, and leave all of their parents out of it, and start from the beginning to build for themselves a CHRISTIAN HOME.

The flowers bloom in clusters and have their home; the beasts and birds have their nests to raise their young and for their home have often given their lives. With the human race, the making of one’s own home is the supreme earthly fascination to which all youth looks forward, and upon which old age looks back. “Be it ever so humble there is no place like home.”

Mr. Guest says, “It takes a lot of living in a house to make a home.” But when a house is thus lived in, and made a home it seems sacred. When I see a worn out, discarded old home, it makes me think of Joyce Kilmer’s poem:

“But a house that has done what a house should do, a house that has sheltered life, That has put its loving wooden arms around a man and his wife, A house that has echoed a baby’s laugh, and held up Its stumbling feet, Is the saddest sight, when left alone that ever your eyes could meet.”

But tho a house alone does not make a home, it still remains that the most satisfying conception of a human home involves some kind of a rather permanent place; a place with a family centered for its every day life, for its growth, its loving, its learning.

One of the greatest sacrifices which the Son of God made for us seems to be summed up thus: “And they went every man to his own house: but Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives” (John 7:53 to 8:1). The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head.

The home place should be used to the glory of God. Lydia’s home place enabled her to care for Paul and Silas while they preached the gospel in Philippi (Acts 16). Aquilla and Priscilla turned their home place into a meeting place for the Church. Mark’s house alive at midnight with praying disciples, was ready to receive Peter from his prison deliverance. On and on we could go with Bible records like these, but these are enough to show us that God wants the Christian home to be ordered right. No wonder then that Paul said for the old women to teach the young women to “be keepers at home” (Titus 2:5). I do not understand that the Apostle means that the wife should just STAY at home; but she is to be a home keeper. In 1 Tim. 5:14 he says, “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” The woman is the home keeper according to God’s arrangement, and parents should train up their little girls to be such.

Many birds have been lost because of a faulty cage, and many husbands have been lost because of an unkept house. No amount of paint, powder and perfume will atone for unwashed dishes, dirty floors, and half-cooked meals.

I understand that when God said to Adam: “In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread”, that He meant to place the responsibility of making the living on the shoulders of the MAN, and no amount of ability to drive his father’s car, play pool or entertain will make up for an empty flour bin. The husband is the head of the family (Eph. 5), and as such he should take the responsibility and see that the wife and children are properly cared for to the extent of his ability. If it is the duty of the wife to keep the home, it is first the duty of the husband to see that she has a home to keep.

Though this home may be just a cabin or a tent, if the husband does his best to be the provider and the wife will do her part of the keeping and they both will trust in God

and abide by His word, in their old days they will look back to this home place as the happiest home on earth.

THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

By BENNIE CRYER

In order to reach the minds of many of the Jews and most of the Greeks (Greeks probably used here for the entire Gentile world but since Corinth was a Grecian city it refers especially to those inhabitants of that city) Paul was having to overcome ancient prejudices, pride, and imperfect interpretations of Old Testament prophecies. Neither Jew nor Greek seemed to be able to grasp the truths expressed in Isaiah 55:8-9, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” The Holy Spirit and Paul confronts this problem head on.

1 Corinthians 1:22,” For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.”

After all God had done for the Jews even sending Jesus his Son who worked many miracles among them most of the Jews were not convinced Jesus was the Christ or Messiah. They wanted to impose their own will on God and have his Son do a particular miracle. We do not know what the particular miracle was they wanted but in Mark 8:11-12 Jesus was confronted with this same problem: “And the Pharisees came forth, and began to question with him, seeking of him a sign from heaven, tempting him. 12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and saith, Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation.” Jesus knew the effect that beholding miracles had on human beings did not last for a long while. Consider Exodus 14:19-31 where sacred history tells of the departure of the children of God out of Egypt. Many miracles had already been seen by them that finally brought Pharaoh to his knees. But then they came to the Red Sea. What a miracle they beheld as they crossed it. There were no mud puddles or slippery rocks. They passed through it on dry ground. Further more the chariots of Egypt were ruined and not one of their personnel survived. How long did the Israelites remember these mighty works of God? Psalms 106:12-13 tells us: “Then believed they his words; they sang his praise. They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel.” With the Jewish mind set Jesus and the apostles could pile up miracles higher than a barn and it would make no difference to them. They had made up their minds that the true Messiah would deliver them from the Roman powers and set up his throne in Jerusalem. Anything less than that they would not accept. The Greeks were a different matter. If Paul and his fellow laborers had spoken or written like the Roman statesman, orator, and philosopher Cicero, or if they could argue and speak like the Greek philosopher Plato they might have listened. Or if they would be like

Seneca, the Roman philosopher, dramatist, and statesman and entertain them they might have been more attentive. But they would have remained lost in their sins. As great as these pagan orators were their ways and thoughts were far below those of God, Isaiah 55:8-9. As brilliant and as wise as they were to their contemporaries they could not devise a plan nor a scheme that would absolve a single sin in the life of anyone so as to save him. But those philosophers thought that through logic and wisdom they could. They were seeking after truth but searched in the wrong places. They sought after truth and then did not recognize it when they came to the right source. Such were many of the Corinthian citizens when they rejected the preaching of God's men. And such are brethren and men today who are not satisfied with God's ways. They fulfill the prophecy in 2 Timothy 4:3, For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

1: 23, But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; The writer is reaffirming what he wrote in vv17-18. If he left the cross of Christ out of his messages he would not be preaching the whole counsel of God. When man depends on the wisdom of words from man the cross of Christ will be made of "none effect" so far as saving men's souls is concerned. But this would have been pleasing to the Jews and Greeks alike. They heard about the Messiah being crucified and it became a stumbling block. Satan used this teaching to further his own cause because Christ's 'ignominious death on the cross roused the opposition of the Jews' (Thayer's), It was easy to entrap or snare the Jews in this way because they considered that message (the crucified Christ) as scandalous. On the other hand the Greek's considered it a silly message that a person of low birth, humble beginnings, and so weak that he could not even save himself from being crucified could save the whole world.

1:24, But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

This is what Paul and his fellow workers preached to the Jews and Greeks (Gentiles). To the Jews specifically they taught that Christ was the power of God. Thayer says this is a metonymy The power came from God but, so far as salvation was concerned, God placed that power in Christ. This is the reason Paul explained to the elders of Ephesus about his preaching activities. In Acts 20:21 he said, "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." The Jews already believed in God but most of them rejected Christ as the power of God unto salvation. Since they rejected God's revelation to them they needed to repent toward God and then believe that Jesus Christ is his Son and is Lord of all. They needed to know that salvation is in Christ. The Greeks needed to believe in the living God and that Jesus is his Son and Lord of all. When they, both Jew and Gentile put Jesus in the right place then the plan for salvation that God favored them

with falls in its natural order: Faith, repentance from their sins, confession that they believe Jesus Christ is the son of God, and baptism (immersion) for the remission of their sins. In another place, Romans 1:16, Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The power came from God. He gave Christ this power. Then Christ extended this power to his gospel. It was necessary for both (Jews and Greeks) to obey the gospel in order to be saved by the power of God. It must not be altered. If it is its power is gone. The wisdom of God in this connection has to do with his scheme of redemption. God knew what it would take to save man from sin. Man did not come up with the idea of the Son of God dying on the cross. Yet the cross with all its ignominy and shame has in it the power of God (w 17-18) that God uses to save men's soul. The saved recognize the power of God in the cross. Brethren, watch out. There are a few among us who are cheating people of their salvation by taking away parts of the gospel and inserting something other than what God has given, Gal 1:6-9. It was possible then and it is possible today. -OPA

ITEMS OF INTEREST cont. from page one

contradict these discernable facts is obviously a false and dangerous position. But if you need more proof that it leads to all kinds of error, consider the second item...

"CHURCH OF CHRIST FELLOWSHIP"

The following comes from an e-mail that was given wide circulation for any and all to read on the Internet. It's really not worthy of a lot of consideration, as far as I can tell, except that it uses a phrase that the reader needs to be aware of. Calling himself "a disgruntled minister of the Church of Christ sect," the man states that "we, who have come to Christ within the Church of Christ fellowship, have been duped." He asserts that "the theology, the terminology, the doctrines, and the practices" that he was "taught over the years are just flat, outright wrong."

I find it interesting that while he complains about unscriptural terminology (as he sees it) being used in the Lord's church, he turns right around and uses an expression that is found nowhere in the word of God- "Church of Christ fellowship" What did he mean by the above expression? It's obvious that he meant that the church is a "sect"- it's just happens to be our denomination among many. [Incidentally, when you hear brethren among us use this expression, perhaps even applying it to their congregation, that should send up a red flag in your mind!]

If this "disgruntled minister" gave an accurate description of the church, did he actually "come to Christ" (his words) by obeying doctrines and practices that are "just flat, outright wrong?" The truth is that he couldn't write a simple e-mail without talking out of both sides of his mouth! On the other hand, this false view of grace asserts that men are right with

God regardless of all the error that one might embrace in matters of theology, terminology, doctrines, and practices. After all, if “old Gus” has a chance, surely the Lord wouldn’t ban someone from the “heavenly choir” simply because he was sprinkled for baptism, would He? Brethren, what we are dealing with here is nothing more than subjectivism and denominationalism, pure and simple!

Does it really matter if we maintain purity of doctrine and life? Here’s the answer that Paul gave: “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16). -2850 N. Oakland Springfield, MO 65803

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WHERE TWO OR THREE continued from page two

times. However, there is no pattern for anyone going off on his or her own and holding services while on vacation.

Another problem encountered is what to do with the collection. How is the money collected at this “service” on vacation to be put to use? Likely, if it is collected at all it is just brought back and put in the treasury at home. Is there Bible for that? None whatsoever! The Bible pattern is always for the collection being taken every Lord’s Day by the church, and each congregation has the responsibility of taking care of their own money. Sometimes the excuse is given that it is just expedient to do that. However, Paul said, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient...“(1Corinthians 10:23) A practice must first be proven lawful before it can become expedient. It may be lawful and still not be expedient, but it can never be expedient if it is not lawful. What is our pattern, which we follow? We are to lay by in store on the first day of the week as God has prospered us. (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2) Paul wrote this to the church at Corinth. This is our pattern, which we follow today. There were no instructions written to those who might be off on vacation somewhere. Their giving was to be done at a congregation, an established assembly, not off by the river somewhere on vacation. You say, “well, what is wrong with our doing it another way?” That same question can be asked of every part of our worship. What is wrong with using an instrument during the singing at worship? The answer is simple, isn’t it? That is not what the Scripture shows us to do. An interesting passage is found in 1 Corinthians 14:37. “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” Paul says his writings to the church at Corinth are the Lord’s commandments. He did not just sit down and come up with some things he thought would be good. The Holy Spirit gave him these things to write. Could it be that what Paul wrote to Corinth was only for their benefit, not ours? No, for he said in 1 Corinthians 4:17 “For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.”

So what have we learned? We know Paul taught the same thing about the Lord’s Supper, the giving, the assembly (Hebrews 10:25) the singing, etc. (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16) to EVERY church. Paul’s writing to Corinth was not of local application at all but applies to all of us today.

There are perhaps other problems brought about by the misuse of Matthew 18:20, but these are of glaring importance. Think on these things. DLK

Foundation Principles

SOMETHING IN A NAME (PART 3)

By CLINT DE FRANCE

In our last article we observed some of the names that men have given to the church and saw many of the most popular fall into condemnation when examined with the scripture. Continuing from our final point we want to look at a few more in search of the one that is given from heaven. (Eph. 3:14-15)

Party Names, the Scourge of Sectarianism

Many religious institutions bear names that reflect a particular doctrinal distinction that they hold which separates them from other denominations. For instance, Baptists are so called, not actually because John the Immerser is called a Baptist in some translations, that was an after the fact defense, but because they believe in adult believers baptism by immersion only.

Doctrinal distinctives that characterize a certain sect have been the most common source of religious names throughout history. The name Methodist originated when John and Charles Wesley became part of the so-called ‘Holy Club’ of Oxford, a group of no more than twenty to twenty-five like-minded friends who believed that repentance from worldliness and holy living were necessary for salvation. This group became known as ‘The Methodists’ because of the methodical approach to spirituality of its members. The group became larger and grew until it formed its own, more evangelical Church with the ideas of Wesley at its head. The name ‘Methodist’ has stuck to this day.

The full name of the Methodist Church is Methodist Episcopal. The name Episcopal which denominates another protestant group is in reference to a particular view of church government and organization (that being that Bishops (the Greek word episkopoi) are an office superior to elders who govern over the churches of a city or region). The Methodist Episcopal church agrees with this, but also adheres to the unique teachings of John Wesley and others.

A similar history in the name Presbyterian Church. Again a reference to the view of government and organization that denomination holds, being that Elders are over

congregations and that two classifications of Elder (teaching and ruling) exist.

Pentecostals are so called because they believe that the beginning of the Church and the ideal of Christianity is found on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ in Acts 2. Adventists are so called because they believe in the second personal, visible coming of Christ. Seventh-Day Adventists because they believe that worship is to be done on the Sabbath. Congregationalists are so called because they believe in the total independency and autonomy of congregations. Holiness churches are so called because they believe that holiness in Christian living is essential for Salvation.

There are General Baptists who believe that the atoning death of Christ was for all mankind in general, whosoever will receive it, and there are Particular Baptists who believe it was for only elect individuals. We could go on and on. Some of these names refer to false, man-made doctrines and would obviously be wrong for that reason, but others refer to true doctrines of Christianity. What would be wrong with wearing the name of a doctrine of truth? Each of these names would be insufficient because they describe only one part of the doctrine of Christ. It is not enough to accept only one part, and neither is it enough to be called after only one part. We must look for a name that encapsulates all of these doctrines in one!

Another kind of name that is not uncommon, and like the aforementioned is the product of sectarianism and division, is to call your church after a convention or association of churches that it is a part of. (i.e. Southern Baptist, Missouri Synod, American Baptist Association...) The error of this is that no such associations or conventions existed in the early church. Each congregation was independent and all faithful churches were in fellowship with each other as brethren.

Christian Church?

Some have suggested that the name of the Church should be "Christian." But while I cherish and respect the name Christian in its proper application, I do not believe that it is the name of the church. The church does not belong to its member and so to call the church after its members as a possessive is incorrect and disrespectful to the true owner. Moses Lard put it about as simply as anyone ever could I think by saying that the Christian Church is "not scriptural and never will be" because there is simply no bible for designating the church that way.

Does the Church Universal have a Name?

The church universal is called by many names from "Bride of Christ to House of God". But as an invisible institution with no earthly structure or organization, there is no one name that is applied to the church universal. When it comes to what we should call the church we must look the congregational level.

Church of Christ or Church of God?

There are many who contest that the name should be the "church of God" seeing as this term is used 11 times in the New Testament. But I think it is important to consider even more closely the relation of each member of the Godhead to the church in order to conclude what the writers are trying to communicate in this terminology. We understand that God is a triune being three in persons, one in purpose. So which part of the God head does the church belong to? Is it the church of the Father? Or perhaps is it the church of the Holy Spirit? Well let's let the scriptures answer that question.

Notice first Acts 20:28, "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Now, which member of the Godhead purchased the church with his own blood? Which one of the three came to earth in the flesh and died on the cross for our sins? The Father? No. The Holy Spirit? No. Only Jesus Christ, the Son. And so when Paul spoke of the Church of God, as a possessive, he seems to have been speaking of God the Son.

This is evident in other passages as well. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build MY CHURCH..." It is the Church that belongs to Jesus Christ. You remember that when Jesus gave the commission unto the building up of his Church, he stated that "all power and all authority" had been given to him by the Father.

Notice what the Apostle Paul says over in 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, "But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, 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."

Until the end of time when Jesus delivers the Kingdom up to God, the kingdom belongs to Christ. Oh what a perfect, awesome and worthier name the Apostle Paul ascribes to congregations of God's children in Romans 16:16 when he says, "the churches of Christ salute you."

The Name of the Members

One final point of consideration is of the name that individuals in the church should wear. I first want to stress that it is not "church of Christ!" We are not called "church of Christ people." The statement, "I am church of Christ" is not only grammatically improper but it is altogether unscriptural! When we speak this way we are calling the church universal by a term that insinuates she is just another fraction (denomination) of the Christian world. This is terribly destructive. In years past one

of the hardest fought battles was to reclaim the name Christian and Christian only. Biblically speaking the only Christians are those who are in the Lord's Church and if you are in the Lord's Church you need not say, "I am church of Christ or I am a Church of Christ Christian." Just say "I am a Christian." If the world asks, "What kind?" A wonderful opportunity has been presented to share the truth.

Now there are many descriptive terms given in the Bible like disciple (meaning a follower) saint (meaning a sanctified person) brethren (meaning members of the same family) children of God (meaning offspring of the father) but these are not proper names.

Now the Prophet Isaiah had given three great prophetic statements regarding a new name that God was going to give to his people. "The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the LORD will name... You shall leave your name as a curse to My chosen; For the Lord GOD will slay you, And call His servants by another name... Even to them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off." (Isaiah 62:5; 65:15; 56:5)

The prophet speaks of a "new" "everlasting" name that would be given by God after the Jewish system had ended and "the Gentiles saw righteousness." (or were converted.) That occurred in Acts 10 with the conversion of Cornelius and his household, and in the very next chapter the Bible says, "And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." (Acts 11:26) And many scholars say that the word "called" here used has special reference to a divine calling. Certainly there is no other name than Christian which better fits these prophecies and can better describe what we are in our relationship to Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul expressed his approval of this name and his great desire to see it applied to all men over there in Acts 26:27-29 where the Bible says, "Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains." In 1 Peter 4:16 the Apostle Peter exhorted that we "glorify God" in the name Christian. I attest to you there is no other name by which we can give him the glory. Now there are some today who would try to minimize the name Christian, Liberal scholars claim that it originated with the heathen as a form of derision, but surely the scriptures we have thus far noticed demonstrate that this precious name is not only divinely approved, but in fact it is of divine origin!

But now we might mention in closing that James, in the words of our text warned how the conduct of the men

and women he was writing to was allowing that "worthy name" to be blasphemed. Is that you today? If you call yourself a Christian, but have not obeyed the Gospel, then it is! You take the Lord's name in vain every day that you call yourself one of his children. I can call myself Bob Smith all day long, but I am still Clint De France, and until you are born again, you cannot truly wear the name Christian. Maybe you are a Christian, but your conduct and your lifestyle drags that name through the dirt, people know that you are a member of the church of Christ, and you have brought reproach on him by your ungodly living!

Thank God for the wonderful fellowship he has given us with Him as individuals and churches to wear the precious name of Christ. Let us all cherish that treasure.

Our Departed

COPELAND, Leonard A - Brother Leonard Copeland was born August 1928 in Post Oak, Oklahoma to Alexander and Sefrona (Morse) Copeland and departed this life November 7, 2011 at Sherman, Texas. He had lived in the Seminole and Maud area for many years and was a member of the Good Hope congregation at Seminole, Oklahoma. Survivors include a daughter, Alice Wixon, of Colbert, OK; three sons, Jack, of Sherman, TX, Jerry, and Donnie of Denison, TX, thirteen grandchildren, and nineteen great grandchildren and other relatives. Leonard set out to preach the gospel but stayed home to care for an ailing mother after his father's death. I have known Leonard and his family for a long time. His influence lives on but he will be missed. The funeral was conducted from the church building in Seminole and burial was at Cummings Cemetery at Maud, OK. I appreciated the help of brother George Battey who led the singing and read the obituary. God bless the family. -Johnny Elmore

DAVIS- Bill Davis was born on December 1, 1934 and died on November 19, 2011 just a few days shy of his 77th birthday. Bill's mother died when he was just 6 weeks old and then his grandmother died when he was ten years old. Consequently, Bill and his brother, Charles, were raised by their maternal grandfather in very poor conditions. They lived in southwestern Arkansas in the area of the little town of Forman. As Doug Edwards said, Bill's story is one of "rags to riches" or more literally from a shoebox to a "mansion" in heaven. When Bill was born the delivery was extremely difficult. The doctor had to be summoned from a long way away and when he arrived Bill's mother was already in trouble and the doctor was drunk. Bill's famous crooked pointer finger was broken in the delivery but it was never set. The doctor did

not think he would live because he was born with double pneumonia. Bill was placed unattended in a shoebox on the windowsill while the doctor turned his blurred attentions to attempting to save Bill's mother. However, thankfully, this new baby refused to die and after sometime, warmed by the sun, his feeble cries were noticed. As he grew Bill became interested in the gospel. In the 40's Lynwood Smith and Johnny Elmore started a church in Forman, Arkansas and Bill attended there some with his brother and his grandfather. Johnny remembers Bill in those days as little more than a street urchin. In the early 50's Bill moved to Oklahoma City and in about 1953 Johnny baptized Bill into Christ. On December 23, 1964 the 21st St. congregation ordained Bill as an evangelist and the next year Bill married Daisy Spradley and to this happy union of over 46 years two children were born: Kay in 1967 and Connie in 1968. Gradually the words of Paul recorded in Romans 10:14-18 became the watchwords of Bill's life. After spending five profitable years working in St. Albans, WV under the tutelage of Moss Covert and another four split between West Monroe and New Orleans, LA Bill entered into the mission which became the love of his life. In 1973 Bill and his young family moved to Zimbabwe, Africa and then a short time later to Malawi. Over the next 40 years Bill spent 25 of them living in four different countries in southern Africa: Malawi, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and finally, Mozambique. He preached the wonderful words of Jesus to both African and American audiences but it was in Africa that thousands responded in obedience to the gospel over the years and hundreds of churches were organized and dozens of preachers trained. Much of this was done under privations that most of us living in the comforts of America cannot really even imagine. In addition to his work in Africa., Bill was responsible for training me in 1973 and later in the 1990's Brandon Stephens. Unlike some of his successors in the work in Malawi Bill believed with all of his heart that only one thing could possibly better the conditions of his beloved Malawians and that was and is the power of God's word to change the hearts and lives and destiny of men's lives. He knew that he could not change their living conditions and while he, personally, was very generous to those in need he did not try to raise their standard of living. He did not lay the stress of his work on the distribution of grape juice but on the preaching of God's word. Bill's passion and firm nature were essential to the church's growth in Africa across the last quarter of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st. Bill was truly a warrior for the cause of Christ. Ron Courter astutely

observed that Bill was never so close to home as he was in when he was in Africa. Bill was a highly respected preacher of the gospel and a recognized scholar of God's word by his peers. He was a man who worked hard to master the instructions of Paul to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24-26. Brother Bill to most of us, he was Oupa (the Afirikanse word for grandfather) to his family. Seeing him interact with his young grandson, Jayden Davis, revealed that the zeal of this great warrior coexisted well with the gentle spirit of a beloved husband, father, and grandfather. Bill is survived by his wife Daisy Davis, his daughter Kay Charles and her husband Mark and Kay's two stepchildren Cassandra Haworth and Blair Charles, and his daughter Connie Davis and her daughter Amber Seba and her son Jayden Davis.

This writer and Ron Courter and Doug Edwards were honored to conduct Bill's funeral. As David said when Abner was murdered, "A giant in Israel has fallen." However, his works and his words do follow him. You may contact Daisy and the girls with your remembrances, cards and letters at: Daisy Davis; 2709 Justin Rd. #23; Flower Mound, TX 75028. Alan Bonifay (alanbonifay1@comcast.net)

Announcements

**PLEASE, SEND YOUR MATERIAL
TO RONNY WADE UNTIL AFTER
FEBRUARY 15, 2012**

As usual, we will be out of the Country (Philippines) during the month of January. Ronny Wade has graciously agreed to publish in our absence. Please, send him all material intended for publication until AFTER February 15. His address is Ronny Wade, P.O. Box 800337, LaGrange, GA 30240. After February 15, resume sending to me as usual. Our thanks for your cooperation. DLK

WEDNESDAY SERVICE

The congregation in Mountain Home AR will begin having Wednesday night services at 6:30 p.m.

A NEW YEAR!

A new year greets us now. The mistakes we made in 2011 are past and we hope we make fewer in 2012. My prayer for the New Year is that we all work together in peace and unity. May this happen all over our Brotherhood! We need every sound preacher to preach as never before, every Christian to live better and more Godly than before, and every congregation to be involved in spreading the Word of God as never before. There is so much to do and

perhaps so little time in which to accomplish that work. May the Lord bless us as we press into 2012. DLK

THE HAWAII WORK

Dear Brethren: We come to you once again with a request for the work in Hawaii. As you have noticed, we have placed a plea for the mortgage payment several times. Some of you have responded and we thank the Lord for that. However, time is growing short now. Unless the mortgage is paid, we risk losing the property to the bank. Is there a congregation who could comfortably take this over for even one year? The payments are now \$1500 per month and the check should be made out to INDY MAC. You can send it either to me (1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550). we will send it in at the proper time or to Eric Stone in Hawaii at 94-371 Ikepono St. Waipahu, HI 96797, and he can mail it to INDY MAC from there. Please let us hear from you right away. Lord bless. DLK

Field Reports

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com Nov. 21- It will probably be 2012 by the time this report is published in the OPA. As I think back on 2011, it will be remembered for a variety of things in our area- we had a blizzard in February, tornadoes devastated Joplin in May, and we even felt the tremor of an earthquake in November. What a year! In spite of all that, however, we were also the recipients of many blessings from our heavenly Father. My meeting schedule ended on a good note by being with the brethren in Seminole, OK in October. With the possible exception on Sunday morning, we had visitors from the community at every service. That, of course, did not happen by accident; it never does. George Bailey, who is laboring with the congregation there, and the brethren had worked hard to get the message out about the meeting. Also, I want to thank George and Peggy for inviting me to stay in their gracious home. In fact, the hospitality from everyone was grand and appreciated. As I now turn my attention to a new year, I am looking forward to a meeting in Oakdale, CA on the dates of Jan. 27- Feb. 5. Let's all determine to "stand up for Jesus," as the song says, and hold high the banner of truth in 2012!

Johnny Elmore, 419 K SW, Ardmore, OK 73401, johnnyelmore@gmail.com Dec. 5 - I have been at home mostly since July due to Sally's inability to walk well. We have lost a lot here because of sickness, moving, and old age but we continue on.

Sean McCallister and I usually speak time about on Sunday, and we and other brethren are making our journey through the New Testament again on Wednesday evening. We will miss the preacher's study and the New Year meetings because I am the sole caretaker here at home. I have been studying the Bible some with young Matthew Barnes and he will speak here on Dec. 14. I am thankful for the young men who are interested in preaching the gospel. I am also thankful to have known and to have been associated with faithful Christians, many now dead, who have helped us to carry on. May God bless every one.

Paul O. Nichols, 14217 Rosehill, Overland Park, CA 66221, Dec. 8 - I recently had the privilege of preaching at Memphis, TN, Birmingham, AL, and Columbia, MO. as well as here at Kansas City (Stony Point). I held short meetings at Memphis and Columbia, with good crowds at both places. It was good to see many whom I had not seen for several years, including my brother, Richard, at Birmingham. The hospitality was good at all these places, and very much appreciated. I now have appointments at Lebanon, MO and Sentinel, OK. I am very grateful for the prayers of the faithful and thankful to the Lord that I am still able to do the work for the Cause of Christ that has been my ambition for more than seventy years now. I am reminded of a statement made by David, in Psa. 37:25, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." May the blessings of the Lord be with all the faithful who continue to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints".

Eric J. Stone, 94-371 Ikepono St. Waipahu, HI 96797, ericstone101@yahoo.com Aloha! We are thankful to God, who continues to bless us beyond what we deserve. We have had 12 local visitors and 16 mainland visitors over the last two months, and were honored to have Bro. Randy Perrin preach for us recently. Our small group is always so encouraged to see new faces, especially when they set aside extra time to spend with us, outside church services. With that said, these have been some difficult times. While rereading my last report, I realize how much it seems as though all the good news we shared has evaporated. We had reported the addition of a new brother in Christ, who never attended another church service after his baptism. There were also a couple of other non-members coming regularly, but those efforts have also ceased for the time being. Needless to say, we need your prayers! On the other hand, our spirits are high, and we are resolved to soldier on for the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter the

cost! Thank you for your continued support and constant prayers.

Dec 11, 2011 Darrell Crawford, 208 E Baldwin Rd Unit S Panama City, Fl. 32405 bugz1955@hotmail.com We trust everyone is doing well during these colder winter months. We have had a very busy, but rewarding couple of months here in Panama City. Our afternoon services on Lords day are going very well. We are still having visitor from the community as well as some digressive couples for which we are very thankful. Some have attended several times. We are still seeing spiritual growth here. One young man has begun reading the text for services as well as leading songs. We feel that soon he will be leading prayers, hopefully this will lead to teaching, so, the spiritual growth is really taking hold. We have two young brothers from other congregations. Daniel Marsh from Dothan, AL. and Bryan Kornegay from the Oyster Bay, Fl. congregations are coming over on a bi-monthly basis to help with the teaching. This is very much appreciated. We were able to go home for Thanksgiving and my father-in-law's birthday. We really enjoyed ourselves there. I was privileged to be able to speak at Ratliff City, Okla. and at the NW 21st Cong. in Okla. City, our home congregation as well as the capitol Hill Cong. also in Okla. City. We enjoyed seeing everyone there our kids and grand kids included, also my wife's parents. While at 21st some friends from Ardmore, Okla. came to visit. I went to school with the woman in Jr. High school, a very pleasant surprise. We are eagerly looking forward to the Dothan, Alabama new year meeting. It should be a very good meeting this year. They are expecting a very large crowd. May we all stick to the old paths and may the Lord bless His church everywhere.

John R. Scott, 903 Peterson Rd. Neosho, MO November 29, 2011 The Burkhart congregation has been in existence for at least 143 years. Our building is 100 years old. Beginning with my Great Grandfather, Richard Watson and with my Great Grand Daughter Bailee, makes seven generations in my family to attend this congregation. This may not mean very much to most people, but it does to me, and I am very thankful for the rich heritage that I have in the "Church of Christ." We have been blessed to have the following Preachers to speak for us during the year, Don Pruitt, John Strain, Brad Shockley, Dennis Smith, Dale Wellman, Billy Dickinson, and our Gospel Meeting in June with Clint DeFrance and our meeting in November with Don McCord. Both of our Gospel Meetings were

well attended with people from the community and from several congregations in the Brotherhood. May we all "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Joe Dan Morgan; Whispering Hills Church of Christ, Miami, OK. My prayer is that this letter finds each of you at peace and diligent in the service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am saddened to notify the brotherhood of the passing of Bro. Rafael Bienvenido Custodio (Ralph Welcome Guardian). Brother Rafael was the original member converted from digression approximately 15 years ago in Dominican Republic. Raphael was in trouble with them often because he questioned their practice of using multiple cups and Sunday School. He came into contact with a copy of a monthly publication, El Pregonero Latino, translated The Latin Questioner, and edited by Brother Murl Helwig. He was delighted to find a group that believed as he did. After a visit from Bro. Helwig he made humble confession and severed his ties with them. Rafael converted his family and established congregations all over the Dominican Republic. There are now nine faithful congregations despite harsh opposition from those that have left the old paths. Consequently, the harder they fought against him the more people he was able to convert to the truth. They were downright mean and underhanded to him at times. Verbally attacking him on radio and in the newspaper, as well as, on the street. He was never moved nor discouraged by these attacks. Although at a disadvantage by back pain and the effects of a stroke he was a tireless worker. He was very effective wherever he went. His smile was infectious, and earned him conversation rights often. He was not critical, harsh or judgmental, he just simply spoke the truth in love right from his open Bible. He presented the truth in such a way as anyone who disagreed with him had to contradict the Word of God. He was a loving husband, father and brother in Christ. To know him was to love him. He will not only be greatly missed, but the Lord's Work is apt to suffer in his absence. I expect there is more that I could say, but it will suffice to say, Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel? 2 Samuel 3:38. Please remember his good family in prayer: Luz, faithful wife; Children, Osuelo, Belki, Roberto, Betania, and Raquel. His son Roberto is a faithful gospel preacher and beneficial to the church in the Dominican Republic.

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THE BACK PAGE...

A REMARKABLE ODYSSEY

BY CARL M. JOHNSON

Jimmie Smith shares with us a letter he received recently from Marlene Shirey that traces the remarkable odyssey Marlene and husband Bill experienced in arriving at the Lord's church. Marlene wrote the letter to Jimmie in response to a sermon he preached in Longwood, Florida, concerning the importance of establishing Bible authority in all matters pertaining to religion.

Marlene explains she was reared in a family completely devoid of religious interest. After she met and married Bill and began to have children, she felt the need to find a church where they could all worship. Having very little Bible knowledge, she was confused about where to go because there are so many churches "teaching and practicing differently, yet claiming to be right." She decided she would visit as many churches as she could in hopes of finding the one she thought would be right for her family.

Bill was skeptical of her plan when Marlene first approached him with it. He reasoned that regardless of which church she visited, she would learn only its respective denominational creed.

Marlene resolved, therefore, that she would not study with anyone from any book except the Bible. She armed herself with the question, "Where does the Bible say that?" She was confident that by asking that question she could find the church for which she was looking. If those with whom she studied could not prove their teaching was from the Bible she would move on and continue her search. Marlene admits that in the beginning, "I really did not know what I was searching for, other than searching to study the Bible to know I was in the right place."

After visiting many churches she eventually happened upon a Church of Christ. The church was small, friendly, and had a few children about the ages of her own children, but it had no Sunday School. She said, "I had never heard of a church that did not have Sunday School, other than the Catholic church." Because Marlene felt Sunday School was absolutely essential for her children, she marked this church off her list with no intention of returning.

A couple of days later, however, two men from the church visited her. They thanked her for attending services and invited her to come back. Marlene declined by saying that their church was just one of many she had visited and that she was not through looking yet. She added that a part of her search included finding someone with whom she could study the Bible. She emphatically declared she was not interested in studying creed books or church manuals, but rather the Bible only. She advised further that she would not be satisfied with any church unless it could show its practices were from the Bible exclusively.

One of the men volunteered to study with Marlene, and he agreed to her proposal of studying exclusively from the Bible. When the man came to study, he brought his wife, child, and Bible with him. They studied with open Bibles, and Marlene found the studies informative and interesting. Soon, however, she expressed her disappointment in the fact that his church did not have Sunday School. He explained calmly that the early church did not have Sunday School and neither did anyone else for a long time. He said she could consult the encyclopedia to find out about Sunday Schools.

They studied once a week for a couple of months and Marlene continued from time to time to press the issue of the importance of Sunday School. She adds, "Finally, he came to study one evening and I brought the subject up again. He had his Bible opened in front of him, and he very slowly reached down and closed it and pushed it aside. He then pointed to my encyclopedia set and said, 'You need to get that book if you want to study Sunday School with me.'"

Marlene reveals, "I can tell you that his patience and that statement stunned me into reality. I don't know exactly why I was so dense, but it was as if a light bulb went off in my head reminding me that I was the one who had INSISTED on not studying any other book than the Bible. It finally sunk in that Sunday School was NOT in the Bible."

Marlene was snared by her own premise. Her intuitive understanding that there must be a "thus saith the Lord" for everything we do in matters of religion was reinforced that evening and indelibly impressed upon her mind. Marlene, Bill, and eventually their children were baptized into the Lord's church and they remain faithful members unto this day.

The spiritual odyssey of this good family is not unique, however. There have been multitudes through the ages that have arrived at the same place because they began their spiritual quest with the common determination to speak where the Bible speaks and to be silent where the Bible is silent (Mk. 11:29-30; Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11; Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18). cmjthebackpage@gmail.com