

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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## IS PROPER WORSHIP ENOUGH?

By JUSTIN OWEN

Is scriptural worship enough to allow us to extend fellowship to all congregations? It is the knee-jerk reaction of some within the church to say “Yes” in answer to this question and say that we can have different opinions about most bible subjects and still care for and be of “one mind” toward each other (1 Peter 3:8-9). Please don’t misunderstand, it is my great desire that all congregations that worship as we do be in fellowship with us. This article addresses that it is not correct to ignore everything a congregation practices and believes so long as their worship appears to be scriptural. Same worship cannot be the only prerequisite for counting a congregation in our fellowship today.

We would be hard pressed to find a person willing to state that same worship is good enough if we extended the thought beyond the people and situations that are in our midst. For example, if a congregation worships exactly like us, yet promotes gay marriage, or stands for abortion, we would not extend an open hand of fellowship to them. If people of the Mormon faith who do supposedly baptize “for forgiveness of sin” were suddenly to start worshipping the way we do, and continued to use the book of Mormon as a guide, would we have fellowship with them also? Could we go to their tabernacles and adopt their practices and beliefs outside of worship with happy hearts? No! So why, when the breaking of God’s law seems less severe to us, do some feel the right to defend those who misrepresent the truth? Everyone draws a line in the sand somewhere, and we need to carefully observe what the scriptures teach about where we must draw it. Correct worship is only one element to consider when extending greeting, for our own souls are at risk (2 John 10-11)!

When members in the brotherhood “draw a line” to declare certain congregations as “rogue” or not in full fellowship, it must be rightly done over false doctrines being taught or the practice or defense of sinful practices. Brethren would be wise to be slow to make these judgments but such situations must be investigated. Brethren should be vocal about the concerns they have with the leaders of these groups. Consider how Jerusalem addressed Peter in Acts 11 after he had preached to the household of Cornelius. Though their conclusions were wrong, they saw what they believed was

inappropriate, they questioned Peter, they listened to his rebuttal and then they made judgment. I believe that can be a biblical pattern in confronting doctrines that do not reflect what the scriptures teach.

The Revelation letter to the church at Ephesus indicates that they did not sit idly by while false doctrine knocked on the door. Some folks have used these verses to declare that Jesus never drew lines of fellowship. A careful consideration of the passage indicates otherwise. In Revelation 2, the brethren of Ephesus were not tolerating false doctrines, or defending sinful practices. Verse 2 says, “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not and have found them liars.” Verse 6 teaches, “But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” Do we know what the deeds or doctrines of the Nicolaitans are? Some scholars believe it is the doctrine of Unconditional Eternal Security that teaches nothing we can do in this life would ever separate us from God and place us in jeopardy of being lost once we are baptized. Jesus said He “hates” that doctrine. Does it sound like Ephesus was tolerating sin in their congregation, or working closely with congregations that had forsaken the simplicity of the truth? They stood firm against the false doctrines of the day. Yet, though their lampstand was not yet removed, Jesus made it clear, without repentance and change from their error of leaving their first love (Revelation 2:4); they would not be the church that He built.

Peter (Galatians 2:11-14), the men of Crete (Titus 1:12-14), Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:18-20), Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Timothy 2:16-18), Demas (2 Timothy 4:9-10) and Alexander (2 Timothy 4:14), are just a few of the men listed BY NAME in the New Testament for their wrongdoing and wicked ways. Most if not all of these men were of the church! Not all of them remained in wickedness, but note with me that the apostle Paul did not have an issue with making others aware of their behavior. Paul sought to correct these brethren and, if they would not be corrected, his teaching was clear: “avoid them” (Romans 16:17), “beware of him” (2 Timothy 4:15).

There is a lot of recent discussion over folks “drawing lines of fellowship” with a congregation and calling out individuals who are creating drama for the church. Can we

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**Editorial**

**“THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY”**

*By: DON L. KING*

Of Paul’s writings none are above the wonderful descriptions of “charity” or love found in 1 Corinthians chapter 13. Many read this great chapter, and tell the world about it. However, relatively few seem to really have an adequate grasp of the meaning. In the Commentary by J. W. McGarvey and Philip Pendleton, the statement is made that “This chapter has been admired by all ages, but, unfortunately, it has been practiced by none.” Often we may also speak of what Paul wrote and our very attitudes betray our lack of understanding. We also realize our feeble attempts may fall short but would venture a few comments nonetheless.

Paul shows in verse one that while he could speak with the tongues of men, undoubtedly referring to a miraculous ability through the Holy Spirit, if it was not accompanied by love, it was as useless as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. What about men blessed today by a wonderful education allowing the use of various languages of the world? Would such a man not also render himself useless to the Cause of Christ if love does not manifest itself within him? If such a person allows himself to be haughty and condescending toward those who are not of the same stature, what good can be accomplished? One would suppose the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal could also be used to describe him. The same sorts of examples are used in verse 3.

An interesting statement is found in Verse 4. “Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.” I like the way another translation renders this verse: “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.” It is certainly rare to find genuine love that accepts criticism, and rather than retaliate offers and confers a blessing. How often do we encounter someone who sincerely attempts to overcome an evil, malicious, act or statement with a blessing directed toward the person who has attempted to harm them? That’s correct, virtually never! Most of us realize if we say something hateful, we are likely to receive something even worse in return. In all honesty, one sometimes reads things even in religious journals that perhaps would have been better left unsaid, and it is not uncommon to hear the same in personal conversations. The truth is, we probably all need to be more careful with what we say, write, and do in dealing with those who have hurt us in some way.

Love that is genuine does not allow one to be jealous or envious of another’s good fortune, nor of his spiritual welfare. Love just simply excludes this feeling. A normal parent would not think of feeling jealous of a child’s joy or accomplishments. However, we sometimes see what appears to be jealousy among brethren. What a shame! Paul also

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## QUERIST COLUMN

*By Ronny F. Wade*

**Question:** What is the meaning of Genesis 6:3? Does this verse speak to the length of human life?

**Answer:** The passage in question reads “And the Lord said ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’” The subject of discussion here is the moral and spiritual condition of the world at that time. The sons of God had contracted marriages with women who did not share their fear of God and His word. This resulted in children being born who were reared with little or no knowledge of God. As a result the world of that day became so steeped in sinful and ungodly conduct that God was grieved in His heart that He had made man. The description of humanity, at that time, is appalling, declaring that “every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Verse eight of Genesis 6 says “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” Noah, a righteous man, followed the instructions of God and prepared an ark for the saving of his house. For one hundred and twenty years he tried to convince the people of their sin, but no one listened. Only Noah and his family were spared the consequences of the great flood sent by God. The reference to one hundred and twenty years in verse 3 is a reference to the time the people of Noah’s day had to repent, and not the span or length of human life. These verses, however, should cause all of us to wonder just how long God will spare the world in which we live. Is it possible that time is running out? We may not know, with certainty, the answer to that question, but we do know the necessity of being faithful servants in order to be ready for our Lord’s return.

**Question:** As disciples of Jesus today, can we be a witness in the same way as those described in John 15:26-27?

**Answer:** No, I do not believe we can, in the context of the verses cited. The ones in question read “But when the comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.” These two verses teach us the following: (1) Jesus is going away, and when he does he will send the comforter

to the apostles, (2) the comforter is the “Spirit of Truth” or the Holy Spirit, (3) the Holy Spirit will testify regarding Jesus, (4) the apostles will “bear witness” of Jesus because they had been with him from the beginning. It is important to notice that the Holy Spirit would not be a witness of Christ separate from the apostles and their work, but rather He would be a witness testifying or working through them. The Holy Spirit would bear witness because “he proceedeth from the Father.” The apostles would offer their testimony “because ye have been with me from the beginning.” The apostles were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word according to Luke 1:2. These two verses have nothing to do with what people today call “witnessing or testifying for Jesus.” No one today qualifies as an eyewitness to what Jesus did while on earth. We have the word of God which includes the testimony of eyewitnesses who were present when Jesus did his wonderful works. We need nothing more. It is very popular today for preachers to claim that they are testifying by inspiration. They claim that “the Lord has sent a message directly to them. Do not be deceived by these people. They have no special power or message. Much of the testimony offered today is an attempt on the part of the person giving it, to try and convince others that they are saved. One need not have a special declaration from God in order to prove salvation. The inspired scriptures furnish us with all we need to know about what to do to be saved. Once we comply with Heaven’s decree we can know, because of our obedience to divine commands, that we are saved. Those who claim to “witness for Jesus” misunderstand the purpose of a witness. A witness is one who saw and can give first hand account of something. We can’t do that because we were not there. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

## A NEW GENERATION

*By JOHNNY ELMORE*

There was a time in Israel when the old guard departed this life. Men such as Joshua and Caleb had proved to be faithful and true, but Judges 2:10 states: “And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel.” What were the consequences of their ignorance of the Lord and his blessings? The next verse tells the sad tale: “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim” (v. 11).

After the Israelites had entered the land of promise and after the death of Joshua, judges were appointed to rule. Later, Samuel, as both judge and prophet, brought some stability to the Nation, but even that did not continue. The Bible says of that time: In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6). As we know, having kings did not help all that much, but kings or no kings, when everyman does what is right in his own eyes, there is sure to be division, confusion, and sin. In giving the statutes and judgments that were to obtain in Israel, Moses warned that they were not to do "every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes" (Deut. 12:8).

In the humble opinion of this writer, many today are ignorant of the history of the church. They do not know or care about the battles that have brought us to this point in time. Like the Israelites of old, instead of driving out the Philistines, they are willing to live comfortably among them. Some children of Israel married pagans and worshipped their gods and accepted their mores and customs. Their acceptance of such reminds me of some of our people today. At one time, advocates of innovations such as individual communion cups, Sunday schools, and women teachers were proscribed, but today some have decided that their ideas about church growth have merit.

A few of us are old enough to remember the days when the future of the brotherhood looked bright. Back in those times, many of our members thought nothing of driving to another congregation to support their meetings and to hear gospel preaching. Our heroes, as young people, were gospel preachers. Our songs were the songs of Zion and we loved to sing. And a good many of our young men set out to preach and were willing to make sacrifices to hold "mission" meetings and to speak in destitute places. Most of our sisters were content to dress modestly and work diligently to occupy their biblical roles as wives and mothers.

Today, it seems to me, spirituality is at low ebb, and few are interested in hearing strong gospel preaching. Some aspire to preach if the occasion is to their liking. Some will attend gospel meetings if recreation is offered. As for the singing, some tell us that God doesn't care how you sound. And, some of our men and women have time to attend "retreats," where they can listen to some denominational person tell them how to live the Christian life.

In old Israel, when good King Josiah came to the

throne and was handed a copy of God's Word, he saw the error around him and immediately instituted reforms. He destroyed the places of idolatrous worship and killed the false prophets and restored the observance of the Passover "as it is written" (2 Kings 23:21).

I realize that we live in different times and that it enrages some people to read and hear these things but what a change it would make if all would make a vow like Josiah and "turn to the Lord" with all heart, soul, and might (v. 25). It would invigorate the church and bring about a great revival of interest.

I am thankful we have some young men today who see the need of gospel preaching. May God bless them as they shun not "to declare... all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). We have some virtuous and dedicated young women, also.

### WHY I LOVE THE OLD SHIP OF ZION

By STEVEN BOWEN

Zion, with the beautiful temple of God once resting on its western slope, is the highest hill in Jerusalem. From her fixed position high above the hills, Zion served as a fortress of protection and a beacon of light to the land of Judah.

Old Testament writers honored this place called Zion and often wrote of her, their writing looking forward to a better Zion, the church of our Lord. The apostle, in contrasting the limitations of the old regime with the blessings in the Lord's church, reminded the Hebrews that they, indeed, had come to that better place:

"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Hebrews 12:22).

We, today, have come to that place. We have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. Sometimes I think we tend to take for granted the grandeur of the church of our Lord that we are a part of today.

Certainly, the faithful prophets of old did not take Zion for granted. They loved her even as we are to love the Lord's church today. With the beautiful imagery of Zion representing the church, many song poets through the years also sought to capture the beauty of Zion, some referring to her as an old ship. In 1977 Conrad Cook penned the beautiful words to "is that the Old Ship of Zion," a song that tells the story of a man standing on a river bank, looking out and seeing the old ship of Zion sailing in the distance.

As he strains his eyes to make out this ship, he realizes that "its hull was bent and battered." He goes on to describe the scene: "Waves were rough," he writes, "but that old ship was sailing. Is that the old Ship of Zion I see?"

What a beautiful image of the Lord's church! Surely, through the ages, the church has been "bent and battered." She has had to endure many storms and a multitude of attacks and will do so until "the Lamb shall overcome them" (Revelation 17:14).

Long before John's vision, however, Daniel of old reminded us that Zion "shall never be destroyed," that she "shall stand for ever (Daniel 2:44).

Today I am so glad to be part of that everlasting ship of Zion, to be able to sail life's sea in this old ship. I want to tell you that I love this church, and I hope that this look back at her beauty will excite you to a greater love for her, too.

There are so many reasons I love old Zion, but there is one timely one here that we want to pause to remember: We love the old ship of Zion, today, because of her history.

True, many of us have a personal history with the church. We were raised by Christian parents and grandparents as was Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5). We could have been born in a place where God's word was silent; but, instead, for many of us hearing the word of God taught was as common as sitting down to eat supper. For those teachers, the gospel was their life. We are thankful for that.

Some of you, however, came across the gospel later in life. Still, someone, somewhere shared the story of redemption with you, and the gospel convicted you and led you to the redeeming blood of Christ through faith and baptism into His death (Romans 6:3).

Regardless of how we arrived at Mount Zion, our history in the Lord's church is rich and deep. But the church of Christ goes further back than our lifetimes and the lives of our forefathers. Prophetically, the history of the church goes back thousands of years to the Old Testament.

Remember Isaiah's great sermon, in the second chapter of Isaiah:

"And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (verses 2-3).

How many gospel preachers and teachers have opened up that scripture to discuss the beauty and history of the Lord's church! Sometimes men forget such scriptures and

prophecies and look back to the nineteenth century, to noble men such as Barton Stone or Alexander Campbell, and say, "There it is. There is where the church of Christ started."

But that is not the case. The church's establishment and existence was cemented in heaven long before the inception of this country. Inspired writers such as Isaiah and Jeremiah anticipated her coming repeatedly throughout the Old Testament prophesies. The Lord Himself ordained this church long ago, saying that the "Lord's House" should be established on a mountain and that "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

Indeed, "out of Zion"! At Zion - more than a thousand years after Isaiah's writing - the apostle Peter stands up and delivers the first gospel message after Jesus ascended to heaven. His message was not a man-made one but was a sermon written by the very hand of the Lord.

Peter-the Lord said only a short while before Pentecost - I want you to preach "repentance and remission of sins ... in (my) name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47).

Peter was faithful to that command. When his sermon at Zion about Jesus Christ comes to a climatic end, the audience cries out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter, led by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, answers,

"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

What happens next is part of the powerful 'vision Isaiah sees in Isaiah 2. Isaiah sees "all nations ... flow unto" this church. And sure enough, on the great day of Pentecost, on the western side of Mount Zion, many "gladly received his word (and) were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41).

The second chapter of Acts records the birth of this new Zion, the church of our Lord. That glorious day the hopes and dreams of centuries past were finally realized.

They were realized on the hill of Zion about AD. 33.

Since that day, the Lord's church has endured her share of difficulty. The storms of innovation, digression, apostasy, and apathy have beat against the hull of this great old ship for these two millennia. By the eighteenth century here in America, it might have been difficult to find the Lord's church teaching and worshipping faithfully.

But secular history tells us that in the early years of the 1800s there were pockets of individuals who had a hungering and thirst for truth. They began to realize that the denominational stems where they worshipped were man-made, not God-ordained. A man here, one there, another

some miles away began to search out the scriptures as did the Bereans in Acts 17:11. Four such men were James O’Kelly, Abner Ones, Elias Smith, and Barton Stone.

They realized that the Word of God no longer was the basis of their faith and practice, and these four men among many others began working for restoration - no, not “for the restoration of any religious group, but for the restoration of the one church of the New Testament,” says Robert Brum back in his History of the Church Through the Ages.

From three separate denominations - Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians these men worked to re-dig some old wells, to restore the church of Christ to its pure form. The rallying cry was one that has been much needed through the ages and is needed today: Let us go back to the Bible.

As they re-dug those wells, they found that the biblical wells did not include infant baptism or sprinkling for baptism. So they discarded those practices. They realized that there was only one name “given among men where by we must be saved,” and that was the name of Jesus Christ So they called themselves Christians, and some began referring to the church simply as the church of Christ, just as Paul does in Romans 16:16.

In 1824, Barton Stone met Alexander Campbell for the first time, and they began to share ideas. At the end of their meeting, Stone said, “We plainly saw we were on the same foundation, in the same Spirit, and preached the same gospel.”

That message of unity is precisely the one the Apostle Paul preached in the first century. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,” Paul writes, “whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

What a beautiful thing it is when we can join together, “drink into one spirit,” and unite on the decks of that old ship of Zion.

Many honest, truth-seeking men from two centuries ago proceeded us in resurrecting that unity. They went back to the teaching of the apostle Paul, when he instructs us to endeavor to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” to proclaim only “one body, and one Spirit, even as are called in one hope of your calling, One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Building upon one foundation - clutching the Word of God as their only creed - these restorers began to go back to the gospel pattern. They taught baptism - immersion -for the remission of sins, they called themselves after no other name than the name of Christ, and they returned to the first century pattern of gathering around the Lord’s Table weekly.

There are a hundred reasons I love old Zion, among them

her rich, biblical history. We do not need to look to the world or to denominational practices to shape the Lord’s church today. We need only to go to the Word of God, search those scriptures, follow the powerful teachings handed down by the Holy Spirit, and “follow after the things which make for peace” (Romans 14:19).

Should we be faithful in keeping her pure - if we serve well within her gracious borders - we will sail on that old ship to a lovely harbor.

As we look ahead just beyond the distant horizon - not far over those restless waves, we can see that harbor now, and just beyond is that “holy city, new Jerusalem” (Revelation 21:2).

Mr. Cook, in the ending of the beautiful “Is That the Old Ship of Zion,” pictures the conclusion of the great journey on the old ship. Courageously, he steps off of the river bank and onto that ship that is sailing on to Glory land.

“As I step on board,” he writes, “I’ll be leaving all my troubles and trials behind. I’ll be safe with Jesus the captain, sailing out on the old Ship of Zion.”

Perhaps the world needs more; but for me - for us - the old ship of Zion is enough.

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*IS PROPER WORSHIP . . . . . continued from page one*

do that? Are Christians authorized to publicly rebuke other Christians? From the sound of Romans 16, it appears we are not only authorized, but also at minimum commanded to stay away from folks that tolerate sin or ignore the truth. How does Jesus remove a lamp stand today? While that is an on-going question that deserves study, it cannot mean that the brethren in error are supported and encouraged to continue in their ways. So is it truly a loving and better way to be quiet when we see people doing what the bible teaches as wrong?

Difficult questions we need to ask of ourselves today include 1. Is tolerance love? 2. Is tolerance a better answer than standing for the truth? Many folks who are taking stands for the truth are accused of being unloving, unkind, and unreasonable. Brethren I hope it is clear, intolerance does not equate to those attributes. What is true love after all? Certainly, it is not being content to sit idly by and watch the devil take more and more of our members and congregations into digression and denominationalism. We need to have more love for the church than that. We need a greater love for people’s souls, instead of our greatest love being for the relationship we have with those people. Brethren, let us not seek to be divisive in our manner, let us seek influence with erring brethren so they will change. Paul says, Let your speech be “with grace and seasoned with salt” (Colossians

4:6). Let us work to persuade people to choose truth instead of tolerance of error.

Congregations that tolerate and encourage the teaching of false doctrines are no place for us to frequent, no matter how convenient it is to our purpose. Congregations that willfully ignore the scriptures by practice and fellowship are not places with which to cooperate. We should always look to the rest of the scriptures before making pronouncements demanding unity with all. Let us not forget, the world wants us to be unified with them also. Shall we cast our lot in with the One-World religious movement that gains ground in our country each day? Shall we just accept people as they are, and not encourage repentance? No one enjoys being accused of being in error. No one enjoys being disciplined by God’s word (Hebrews 12:11). Everyone wants to be in fellowship, without changing who we are. That is not what the bible teaches us to do. The bible is clear on the matter, “Do not be deceived, evil Company corrupts good habits.” (1 Corinthians 15:33). Pray for the souls of the innocent at places that are straying from the path, encourage who you can to change their ways, but for the sake of your soul, do not surround yourself with those making poor spiritual choices.

I will leave you with a scripture to ponder. King Jehoshaphat was confronted by God’s prophet after extending his hand in fellowship to the wicked King Ahab. We find the account recorded in 2 Chronicles 19:1-2 “And Jehoshaphat the King of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem. And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.” If the good King Jehoshaphat obtained God’s wrath because of his union with Ahab, do we really expect God to feel differently about our desire to encourage and keep those who are in sinful practices around ourselves? 6634 N. Winery, Fresno, CA 93710. justin@clovischurchofchrist.com

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*THE GREATEST OF THESE . . . .continued from page two*

mentions that love does not “vaunt” or boast itself. (Verse 4) Of the word “vaunt,” Thayer wrote: “vain-glorious, braggart ...is used of self-display, employing rhetorical embellishments in extolling one’s self excessively.” Jesus said in Matthew 6:1, “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.” This seems to be the very thing Paul says love does NOT do. Yes, there are times when some seem to enjoy having their “love” seen, and known, of others. A good deed is done but care is taken to be sure others know about it. That is one way our love can be vaunted and we are boasting of it when we do such. By making a show of what we are doing or how great our love and compassion is toward others, we are guilty of vaunting or boasting in our love. This is a serious offense and we need to be careful. If we really have love toward our brethren, we do not need to tell them because our actions will make it impossible for them not to see it themselves.

Too often we feel the need to let everyone know how good we are and how much we love everyone.

We recall a statement Wayne McKamie used to make in his preaching. He said, “As I go from place to place I meet a lot of humble people. How do I know they are humble? They tell me!” The same is perhaps true with some of us who want everyone to know about our love.

When we misbehave toward others and say harmful things to or about them, we may be certain we are not showing our love. Paul said in verse 5 that love “doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.” Have you noticed a loving mother with a child? How patient she is as she continues to instruct the child in the better way. Now, contrast that with the manner some treat their brethren. See the difference? Of course, you do. What is the lesson to us here? It is obvious we do not love others as that patient and loving mother.

When we find ourselves the object of another’s wrath and mistreatment, do we hope some misfortune befalls that person? Paul says in Verse 6 love “Rejoiceth not in iniquity...” Do we rejoice when one of our children is harmed in some way? Of course not, we would do anything to help the child avoid that unfortunate event. Why is this so? Because we love the child more than life itself and would gladly bear all of their misfortunes ourselves if only we could. So, we are not to rejoice when something bad happens to a person who has been unkind to us.

We may have more to say in a later issue of the paper but for now, “Think on these things.” DLK

## Announcements

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**GOSPEL PREACHER NEEDED**

After fifty five years of existence, South-Side Church of Christ, in Andrews, Texas, has fallen on hard times; due to its member’s death, some having moved to other cities, others having left the faith, her young people moving elsewhere to go to school and etc. At this stage in my life, being eighty-two years old, I am no longer able, physically to do what needs to be done. Therefore we are in desperate need of a

preacher who is willing and able to work hard to help us restore the church here and to do the work of an evangelist. We are a conservative congregation and of course would demand that any preacher who worked with us, be the same. We are able to support someone with a liberal salary for a year or two and to help financially in areas, as well as working with you toward the up building of the cause of Christ in our city. If anyone should be interested, please contact: C. A. Smith, at 7 Old Lampasas Trail, Odessa, TX. 79765, or call (432) 653-1337 (Home) or (432) 213-3655 (cell) and we will arrange for you to come out for a few days, to look over and consider the work that we desire for you to do; and if you are satisfactory to us, we will see that you start the work at the earliest date you are available. For the church in Andrews, TX. C. A. Smith

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Dear Bro. King,  
The Fort Lauderdale Church of Christ greets you, in the name of Jesus! It is our... Bro. & Sis. James Nelsons hope to move to North Florida in the very near future. With regret there will NO LONGER be a faith-filled, TRUE ONE CUP CHURCH OF CHRIST meeting in this area. As a matter of fact, no TRUE Church will exist in the SOUTH FLORIDA area after our departure. Therefore, the last date of worship in this location will be MAY 14, 2013, Lords will. The address is 100 S.W. 11th Street, Fort Lauderdale FL 33316. So we ask if you would please, place this notification in the Old Path. Thank you so very much. In Christ, Bro. James Nelson 954.584.4533 sandrabiz@bellsouth.net

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**CAMBODIA WORK**  
*By JONATHAN EDWARDS*

Dear brethren,

We wish to proclaim among the brotherhood of the wonderful news of a "great and effectual door" (1 Cor. 16:9) that is opening to the gospel of Jesus Christ in the country of Cambodia. With reports going out from our dear brothers Dennis Crawford and Michael Bolton, the congregation of the Lord's church at Denton County would like to take some time to share with you about this chapter in the Lord's church.

Our leadership has had a goal for foreign evangelism since our establishment in 2008. After years of prayer and searching, we decided on Cambodia. Our reasons were: poverty, war, lack of education, and hopelessness. Much like many African countries where the gospel has had great return, we felt like the poor and the weary often answer the Lord's call to greater effect. We slowly began to ask around about evangelists with experience in foreign travel to see how we might scout such a country. While contacting Brian Burns of Goshen, OH, he also received an inquiry from brothers Dennis Crawford and Savorn Him of the Washington area concerning Cambodia. He put them in touch with me.

In January 2012, I flew to Washington to meet these brethren. Their zeal and compassion are great. The brotherhood would be well served if more had their faith and commitment to spreading the gospel. After resolving with the Pacific congregation that the Denton County church of Christ would oversee the work in Cambodia from the American side, we made plans for a summer trip. In June 2012, Savorn, Bradley Ballard, and I flew to Cambodia for a three week scouting trip. (Savorn is Cambodian by birth and origin, he moved to America later in life). With Savorn as our translator we proclaimed the Kingdom of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ to many.

While denominations have a foothold there, it is not like many countries where we have tried to gain ground in the past. The Khmer Rouge, a communist regime, wiped out religion in the 1970's and 80's, and only in the past twenty years have religious groups been able to practice freely and safely. Imagine that, instead of over a hundred years of denominationalism, only combating against twenty! Not all have heard the gospel, or even of God; so our studies varied from the plan of redemption to how to worship God in spirit and truth. Praise be to God, the people listened and the seed was planted. Three souls obeyed the gospel in the town of Steung Trung, establishing the Lord's church in Cambodia. We planted the seed elsewhere, hoping and praying for a fruitful return.

In February, 2013, we received word that Savorn Him wanted to return to Cambodia. Brother Dennis Crawford wished to accompany him as well. We sent evangelist Michael Bolton of Paris, TX along as well. Bradley and I are both school teachers by trade, and would not be available to go in February. Their trip was an overwhelming success. Capitalizing on the planted seed in many of the bible studies from the summer trip, eleven more souls obeyed the gospel, and now there are three congregations established. We cannot thank Savorn Him, Dennis Crawford, and Michael Bolton enough for the fine work they did.

As to the future, we have been reserved to share all our goals as sometimes plans may change, but we feel like the time is now to let you, the Lord's people, see our vision for the future in Cambodia. We first wish to declare that God is in control and that He will be the Great Decider of our plans. Knowing this, our plan for the next few years is thus:

Lord willing, Savorn, Bradley, and I will return in the summer of 2013 to visit these three established congregations and strengthen them, as well as a strong evangelistic push in Phnom Penh, the capital. In the winter of 2013 or early 2014, Michael Bolton will return to edify and strengthen the churches. In summer of next year (about a year and two months from now), Bradley and his sweet wife Brandi, along with my wife Marissa, our children, and I, will move to Cambodia for a two year work. Our goal in those two years is to help strengthen the churches and make them mature, faithful, rightly able to divide the word, and self-sufficient. We hope not to see an explosion of congregations across the country, but an explosion of maturity and wisdom

among those who are baptized. While we hope and pray for growth in numbers, we also hope that the leaders and the churches native to Cambodia will carry out that mission.

We write this report to encourage you as God's people that the gospel message still rings true today! We also wish to introduce this new work for your prayers and your interest. We hope for Cambodia to be a country in which the church grows and matures without an overwhelming influence by Americans. We hope that after our two years of living there that our presence will no longer be needed on a permanent basis, but rather temporary with periodic returns to visit much like evangelists do in the Philippines, India, and countries in Africa. If we were to overwhelm this new work with American dollars and persons, it would only decrease Cambodian Christians ability and desire to mature and take ownership of the work.

We ask, therefore, that if you ever have questions or interest concerning Cambodia, that you contact us. We will do our best to answer any question and assist in any interest you have. If a time ever comes where Cambodians write letters requesting support for a preacher or a building, please let us know as well. Our hope is to show like in the book of Acts, that when the church is established, the autonomy and responsibility belongs to that congregation.

As the congregation of the Lord's church that is overseeing the American travels and guiding these new babes in Christ, we call on you to rejoice with us, pray with us, and be aware of the wonderful news of this newest chapter in the history of the Lord's church. Jonathan Edwards - 3011 Scott Mill Road. Carrollton, TX 75007 - (214)578-1444 - ifollowchrist@gmail.com

## Our Departed

**WILLIAMS**, Brother Vernon Williams of Hindsville, AR passed from this life March 29, 2013 at the age of eighty one.. He had only been ill a few months before his untimely death. He was a faithful member of the Hartwell, church of Christ near Huntsville, AR. Vernon was a good man, one who loved his family, his brothers and sisters in Christ, and his neighbors. He always wore a smile and greeted others with a friendly hand-shake when he met them. He was in the words of the old poet "a common man." A standing-room only crowd gathered in Huntsville for the memorial service, a tribute to his standing in the community where he lived. Surviving are his wife Joie, one son Jeff and one daughter Valerie, one grand-son and two grand daughters. He will be greatly missed by all. It was my privilege to have baptized Vernon some forty-two years ago, and to speak words of comfort and warning at the memorial service.- Ronny F. Wade

**CASTLEMAN**, Sister Aslee Castleman, member of the Fossil Creek congregation in Ft. Worth, TX passed from this life on January 14, 2012. She had been the wife of Jim Castleman who preceded her in death. She is survived by her three children Pauline, Jo Ann and Earl. Aslee was

faithful to the church and her faith in Christ was evident by her godly life. The memorial service was conducted on January 17, 2013 with brethren Randy Cantrell and Keith Minter officiating.

**KOLLER**-- Diane Marie Koller was born March 31, at Antlers, OK and departed this life March 25, 2013 in Ardmore, OK at the age of 83. She was married to R. C. "Joe" Koller June 2, 1946 and they celebrated over sixty-six years of marriage. Diane obeyed the gospel in 1954 and was a member of the church in Ardmore. She embraced the role of wife and mother and was highly esteemed by the church for her many great qualities. She is survived by her husband, Joe, two daughters, Pat Koller, of Austin, TX and Terese Adams, of McKinney, TX and one granddaughter, Hannah Adams. Her funeral was conducted by the writer from the Griffin-Hillcrest chapel on March 27. She will be missed. - Johnny Elmore

**WRINKLES** --Esther Cleo (Keller) Wrinkles was born June 28, 1917 near Denlow, Mo., and departed this life on January 17, 2013 at Mtn. Grove, Mo. Esther was 95 years, 6 months and 20 days of age. She married Raymond Mears on Feb. 7, 1935. Two sons, Lonnie and Donnie were born to this union. Esther was married to Clifford Wrinkles on September 27, 1946. Clifford and Esther had one son, Larry. Esther and her good friend, Ruby Proctor, were baptized into Christ by Ervin Waters in June of 1943. Esther served the Lord in His church for almost 75 years. She was a member of the congregation at Fieldstone. Esther had a tremendous influence for good among those in the church and out! Esther was preceded in death by her husband Clifford, her son Donnie, one granddaughter Linda Mears and one brother Cecil Keller. She is survived by two sons, Lonnie and wife Verla Mears of Springfield, and Larry Wrinkles and wife Teresa of Vanzant. Esther also leaves behind one grandson Doug Reese, two granddaughters Deanna (Mears) Harris and Ashely Theodouro; two great grandsons Gavin Harris and Quinton Reese and one sister Irene Dooms of Ava, Mo. At the service one of Esther's favorite poems was read by Clark Carlo. Ron Alexander led the congregation in prayer and read scripture. Congregational singing was led by Greg Harris. It was my privilege to speak words of comfort and warning to an overflowing crowd. Esther will be greatly missed by all who knew her. -Irvin Barnes

## Field Reports

Bennie T. Cryer, 4635 Larkin Rd., Live Oak, CA 95953, April 15, My health seems to continue to improve. I am at the half way point in my chemo therapy treatment and the doctor plus my feeling so much better all indicate that they are working. Your prayers, God's help, the medicine, the doctor's expertise, and the wonderful care Joann has provided me have all helped me in this recovery. I have received hundreds of cards, e-mails, phone calls, etc. that have been such a source of encouragement. May the Good Lord bless you for all these kind deeds. Because of the improvement I started preaching again about a month ago at our home

congregation in Olivehurst, CA. Sam Dewitt and others shared the extra load of teaching and did a good job. What a joy that was along with the encouragement from the great brotherhood we have. Please keep praying for a successful recovery and for others that I hear are experiencing worse things than I am. Again, may God bless you.

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com April 1- I was privileged to attend and participate in the study at Columbia, MO back in March. I am really impressed with the zeal and spiritual strength of this congregation. Several states were represented, the presentations were greatly instructive, and the hospitality was grand. Our Spring meeting here at Jamesville is just a few days away with Doug Hawkins on April 5-7. Knowing the type of preacher that Doug is, we anticipate some strong preaching from God's word. Our Fall meeting will be with Carl Johnson on the dates of Oct. 4-6. My meeting schedule takes me to the following places: June 12-16 at Claxton, MO, June 29- July 3 at the Missouri 4th of July meeting (along with Smith Bibens), Aug. 17-25 at Hoyte, TX (along with my brother, Jerry), Sept. 18-22 at Aurora, MO, Oct. 9-13 at Moore, OK, and Oct. 16-20 at Columbia, MO. If you can, please come and help us out in these endeavors. Please remember us when you pray!

Johnny Elmore, 419 K SW, Ardmore, OK 73401, johnnyelmore@gmail.com April 9- We are still moving along here at Ardmore as well as we can. Due to the desire to care for Sally, I am confined at home most of the time. I have been speaking about the seven churches of Asia, mentioned in Revelation, on Sunday afternoons. Not so long ago, I heard Joe Hisle speak at Ratliff City, and lately I heard Melvin Blalock speak at the same place. We have many in the congregation here who are limited by medical problems and infirmities of the flesh but it is our desire to contend for the faith "once delivered to the saints."

Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com April 11- Our meetings at Hwy 84 in Brookhaven, MS and Pleasant Grove, IN were both enjoyable and profitable. In Mississippi we had great crowds and cooperation from area churches. It was a real joy to see so many with whom we had labored in the past. In Indiana the crowds and interest exceeded our expectations. Several outsiders attended, some more than once. One confessed wrongs and just after the close of the meeting two were baptized. Next we were with the church at Montreal, MO. This is a small, but strong group of Christians endeavoring to hold forth the light of truth and wisdom in their community. Excellent crowds greeted us at each service. Unfortunately I will be unable to hold the meetings in KY at Blue Springs and London scheduled the last of April, due to my illness. I have been diagnosed with myelofibrosis, a blood disorder. Current treatment demands that I stay

close to home for a few weeks to make sure that I can tolerate the medication. I ask the prayers of everyone and hope that within two months to be back on the road preaching as I have for the past sixty plus years. May God richly bless His people everywhere.

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, April 11, e-mail old\_paths@juno.com The church in Fremont is at peace and all are in good spirits for which we are thankful to God. Last Lord's Day we were happy to preach at Turlock, CA. We enjoyed a good day and visit with the brethren there. It was good to be with Richard DeGough again and relive old times. The work in the Philippines is healthy and growing. The brethren there are also at peace and working together. We just learned of a congregation who needs to drop their support of some Filipino preachers so if your congregation is willing to be involved in a great work, let us know. We can put you in contact with the preachers and your support can be sent directly to them. Lord willing, we are to begin Wednesday, April 17th at Fossil Creek in the Dallas Fort Worth area. We look forward, as always, to being with those good brethren for a gospel meeting. Don't forget to pray for our sick.

Bob Johnson 4248 Reserve Rd. # 102 Lexington, KY 40514 April 6, 2013 (972)741-1163 My work with the church here began the end of September 2011. Since that time there has been three confession of faults. One was a brother that had been out of duty for a period of time. Since his restoration he has been a great help in leading songs, prayer, and waiting on the Lord's Table. A young college brother I have been supplying material with to learn to teach, gave a lesson last month and did very well. It has been a great encouragement to the congregation here. Brother Zac Evans who had been working with me in door to door evangelism has since moved to Somerset, KY. He is currently working with the Walnut Grove congregation. We continue to assist one another when the need arises. I am very impressed with Zac, he studies hard and holds firm to the scriptures. I would not hesitate to recommend him for meetings, if a congregation so chooses. Lord willing, I will be hosting the Annual Anniversary Meeting for the Allen, Texas congregation April 26-28 which will be history when this field report comes out. The church in Mineral Wells, Texas has asked me to host their Memorial Day Meeting. The dates are May 24-26. The last two evenings, my wife and I drove to Liberty, KY to hear brother Jerry Dickinson in a meeting for the Hill Top congregation. As always, Jerry gave some great Lessons and it was good to spend some time with him. May the God of heaven continue to bless and comfort all those that remain faithful to His cause.

Greg Gay, April 3, 2013. Cassie and I were in Hawaii in February and worshiped with the church in Waipahu two Lord's Days along with Ervin Baker, Cassie's dad, from Houston, MO. We always enjoy our time with the brothers and sisters in Hawaii. Brethren Eric Stone,

Edimar Daguio, and Melvyn Ventura, along with Eric's two sons are very capable in conducting the work and worship of the church. I was at Crescent Ridge, near Birmingham, Alabama March 24-31. This was my first time there and I greatly appreciate the congregation for the opportunity to preach during the great tradition of their spring meeting. I enjoyed the hospitality of Lance and Sherry Russell plus was able to share meals and time with many families during the week. They have a wonderful balance of young and old members, exactly as the Lord intends and as all congregations would desire. Brethren came from near and far during the course of the meeting including Bob Cunningham, Don Snow, Pat Adkison, Don Jackson, Rick Martin, and Kevin Presley. I enjoyed spending time with Greg Jordan and Richard Nichols, who make Crescent Ridge their home. Blake Wallace arranged for the young men to speak in the Saturday morning service. Elton and Aaron Prince, Tyler Harris, and Kyle Keeran all did an excellent job. Our work continues at 64th St. in Sacramento where we are thankful to serve the brethren. 1820 Casterbridge Dr., Roseville, CA 95747 papagreg@aol.com

Steven Bowen, 105 N. Lenard, Red Oak, Texas 75154 /972-824-5197 steven.bowen@redoakisd.org Mail to: steven.bowen@redoakisd.org "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ... that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). We could not help but think of those words recently as we sat in the living room in Dallas, Texas with an older black gentleman who had contacted us through the television program. As we visited, he began telling me his story. "I was taught," he said, "by a man named Brother Goddard out in California." Immediately I smiled and said, "Yes sir, I knew Brother Goddard when I was a boy." The powerful, old-time, one-armed preacher made an impression on me when I heard him preach beside my grandfather Brother Miller in 1967 near Flint, Michigan. Brother Cicero Goddard had taught the 82-year-old Andrew Wherry when he was a young man, and his teaching from the scriptures never left him. Brother Wherry went on to tell me that he moved to Dallas in the early-60s and attended the Lord's church off of Syene Road near Mesquite. The church dissolved soon after that, and our brother lost touch with the one-cup church until about two months ago. For almost half a century, Brother Wherry wandered in the cups and classes church, never feeling right on the Lord's Day as he took of the individual cups. By the time we visited in his home, he had already requested some material from us and had passed them out to a few of his friends and his preacher. The next day after our visit we picked him up, and he attended Wednesday night service with the good brethren at Duncanville; later that night, again in his living room, he took his stand again with the truth of the gospel as we prayed together like old friends. Our good brother has been faithful since. One sister asked if I studied with him, and I said, "We didn't have to convince that brother. He discussed the scriptures, and he told me that it was as easy as one-two-three." Isn't it wonderful when men and women read the scriptures in their simplicity and accept

them so readily'. We are thankful for those with such "good and honest hearts." We are thankful, too, for those old-time preachers and teachers, leaders men and women alike who stood strong for the church, for old Zion, in the years past, and have taught the truth of the scriptures on both the right hand and the left. Indeed, their "works do follow them."... Thanks so much to all of you for your prayers on our behalf and on behalf of the Christians in our works in Lexington, Oklahoma and Duncanville, Texas, and wherever we are able to share the gospel, whether it be written or spoken, private or public. We look forward to hearing from you. God bless.

Roger L. Owens Freeman Road Congregation. My address is: P.O. Box 239 Neosho, MO. 64850. Phone # 1-417-451-0330: I returned last week from Casper Wyoming on 3/18/13, after a very delightful 12 day trip. Leland Moore and I were able to visit and follow up on questions and concerns from local residents. We spent time with Maria Johnson who attended services Sunday morning following our visit. She intends to be with us. We also visited with the Harris family and are in hopes things will improve for them. Ed is confined to a wheelchair and has limited mobility in his body. We ask that all pray for them. Due to his disability they are limited from coming to worship in bad weather. I returned home safe to find the congregation at Freeman Road doing well. When I am gone we often have visiting speakers come in to help out. Bryan Osborn is helping us with singing and song leading on the 4th. Sunday afternoon each month. The Howards who come to our afternoon services also help out and that is a blessing to the congregation. We need help in this area of our services, that is singing. We currently have seven men who care for the general services each week. Three of us do most of the teaching while the other men help in singing, prayers, and the Lord's Table in worship. One Wednesday night each month we have reading and prayer which allows the male members to read a chapter or lead a song. We have read through the New Testament and are now reading through the Old. We hope to develop more of our men in becoming local teachers and better song leaders etc. Someone ask if we were going to end the work at Freeman Road and return to West Hwy 60? The answer is No. We had considered West Hwy 60's needs and our own, considering that possibility, but they indicated all is well with them and we are doing well. Our biggest struggle is simply the development of local men and families in the King's service. We have gained much ground and hope to gain more this year Lord willing. Of course we have to handle problems and issues that come along, we all do if we are busy. I get a bit amazed as I hear things that come back to me about matters concerning our congregations issues, but they never seem to really exist as given from others accounts. Like most smaller congregations we have our weekly struggles but we are still very much in the hunt as they say. Lord willing we have many works ahead of us this year in service to the King. Pray for us and the Casper efforts as we continue to labor for the Master. I must mention the excellent help and support from the 20th Street congregation and the members who have made my travels and work easier. I can't say enough to their credit. I end by asking all to remember our brethren, men and women battling health issues.

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## THE BACK PAGE...

### BAPTISM: SACRAMENT, SYMBOL, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

By CARL M. JOHNSON

After seven years of discussion, representatives from the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed Churches have agreed to recognize each other's positions on baptism. Representatives signed the "Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism," in an effort to achieve unity among these groups that have been divided for many years (Christianity Today, April 2013, p. 12).

For 1500 years after the establishment of the church - up to and including Martin Luther himself - there existed a remarkably consistent agreement among those professing Christianity concerning the meaning and purpose of baptism. The mode of baptism (immersion) and the subjects of baptism (penitent believers) had been corrupted by the Catholic Church long before the Protestant Reformation. The Catholics replaced immersion with sprinkling and began baptizing infants. They also designated baptism as a "sacrament," which is a word that cannot be found anywhere in the Bible, but is used to refer to rituals that channel God's grace automatically-independent of faith or repentance in the recipient. At the beginning of the 16th Century, however, most everyone who professed Christianity, including the Catholic Church, agreed that baptism was a condition of salvation, and that it was the point of transition from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

Around 1520, however, Roman Catholic Huldreich Zwingli began a radical revision of the popular meaning and purpose of baptism. Zwingli launched the Swiss Reformation in Zurich about the same time Martin Luther was doing the same thing in Germany. Zwingli's work was cut short by his untimely death in 1531, but the basic elements of his thought were adopted by John Calvin, who took over the reformation work in Switzerland, operating out of Geneva. The general system of theology and church practice thus begun by Zwingli and worked out by Calvin goes by the name "Reformed."

Reformed theology exhibited in Presbyterian, Baptist, and Wesleyan traditions defines baptism as a symbol that signifies a person has been saved, but that the symbol has nothing to do with effecting salvation. Baptism is commonly described as an "outward sign of an inward change," but nothing more. Zwingli argued, "Salvation precedes baptism which symbolizes it."

It is incredible that Zwingli and his contemporaries could repudiate 1500 years of consensus belief that baptism is essential to salvation, replace it with the radical belief that baptism has nothing to do with salvation, and have that belief prevail in most Protestant churches until this day.

While the Catholic and Reformed churches have agreed to accept each other's positions on the meaning of baptism, the Lord's church cannot accept either of them.

We cannot accept the Catholic designation of baptism as a sacrament - one of seven sacraments they believe is essential to salvation. They apply the Latin phrase, "ex oper operato," to baptism and it implies a goal can be obtained by virtue of performing the ceremony. In other words, you can save a person by baptism whether faith, repentance, and confession accompany the baptism or not.

Zwingli was correct in rejecting this doctrine. He said, "In this matter of baptism, all the (Church) Fathers were in error ... (they) have ascribed to the water a power which it does not have and the holy apostles did not teach ... because they thought the water itself effects cleansing and salvation."

Peter very clearly shows that baptism's saving power is not through some physical property in the water itself. It is not just a matter of using water to wash dirt off the body, nor does the water function as a cleanser for the soul in some metaphysical sense (1 Pet. 3:21). The saving power comes from God alone who saves us by the blood of Christ when we come to Him in faith, repentance, confession, AND baptism.

But, we cannot accept the Reformed Churches position on the meaning of baptism either - that baptism is merely a symbol of salvation, but has nothing to do with salvation itself.

It is true that baptism has multiple symbolical meanings. It is a symbol of washing (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:25-26; Heb. 10:22), death, burial, and resurrection with Christ (Rom. 6:1-4; Col. 2:12), re-clothing (Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 3:9-10), incorporation into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:41), and new birth (Jn. 3:4-5). Baptism, however, not only signifies all of the above conditions, but it is actually the point at which all of these things are bestowed. Baptism is not only a sign of these things, but it is a true means of receiving them (Gal. 3:27; Eph. 1:3).

I salute anyone who is truly devoted to promoting unity among all believers in Jesus Christ as commanded by the Lord (Jn. 17). However, the efforts by the Catholic and Reformed Churches to achieve unity by agreeing to accept each other's erroneous doctrines are misguided. Their interests would have been much better served if their representatives would have imitated the men who led the 19th Century American Restoration Movement. These men abandoned all man-made traditions and based unity exclusively upon the Word of God alone. the backpage@gmail.com