

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

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE IS 85 WITH THIS ISSUE

With this issue the paper marks eighty five years of publication. It has been an honor and privilege to be involved in publishing it for 40 years. We offer our sincere appreciation to all the editors, and to Ronny F. Wade who has served as Assistant Publisher in this worthy endeavor. We are thankful the paper continues to be a conservative voice in the midst of a liberal world. May God bless the Brotherhood in the New Year. -Don L. King

THE DUMBING DOWN OF AMERICA IS COMPLETE By DOUG HAWKINS

Whew! Tired of politics? Were you astounded by the lack of character in both Presidential candidates? Daily, I have to remind myself that God rules in the Kingdom's of men. As a boy who grew up in rural Oklahoma, my patriotism causes me to grieve for my Country, but may the Lord's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. I am sad, however, that the values and traditions that have underpinned the nation's existence are being destroyed. Has America been perfect? Far from it. America has certainly come a long way in its existence, though. We have to acknowledge that certain changes have been for the better. We are a nation that incorporated slavery into its founding documents, but in 2008 elected our first partially black president. We are a nation that only granted women the right to vote in the early 1900's, but had a very good chance that the first woman would be elected to the Presidency this year. Issues of the economy, immigration and healthcare aside, surely we can recognize the progress of society's attitude toward people of different races and ethnicities and the political changes toward women. I can say that with all sincerity even though signs of reverse discrimination are flashing all around. I am a white educated middle aged male, which has probably become the very worst demographic that you can

be in America today as that demographic is quickly becoming the minority, blamed for all the ills of the world. (Oh well, when I was a kid adults ate first and when I became an adult, kids eat first. I missed it somewhere on all fronts! For the Millennials sake let me add LOL) Anyway, now to the point.

I recently saw a Facebook video with the title of this article. The title having caught my eye, I clicked to watch it. The video dumbfounded me. A young college aged reporter walked about a College campus asking basic history and civic questions like who fought in the Civil War or how many branches of Government are there? Not a single young person knew any of the answers. She then asked who Brad Pitt married and every person gave the correct answer as well as all the other pop culture questions she asked. Scary to say the least. Did you know that most attribute Mr. Santayana as the first to have expressed, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” We all have heard it expressed in various terms and attributed to different people, but most of us believe that maxim. Unfortunately, the same is true spiritually.

I recently held a meeting in Livermore, CA and while there, got to spend some time with Bro. Don King. Looking for guidance from a more seasoned (that's a polite way of saying 'older' preacher, I asked Don what themes and subjects would be good to address in articles for the paper. He said, “things having to do with us losing our identity and drifting from the principles of God.” God said through the prophet Hosea, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). Regrettably, we are following the same course of destruction in the churches in America today and unless we consciously change direction and recommit ourselves to the fundamentals of the gospel - to educating ourselves and studying with each other we will surely too be destroyed. We are condemned to repeat history.

Paul told Timothy to “take heed to himself and to the doctrine.” Continue in them and Timothy would both save himself and them that heard him (1 Tim.4:16).

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Editorial

THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

By DON L. KING

In this issue, we want to briefly notice the so called unforgivable sin. The passages are Matthew 12:31, 32 and Mark 3:28-30. Jesus had been healing those possessed with evil spirits as well as those who could not hear or speak. Naturally, it caused everyone to be “amazed,” (Matthew 12:23) but the Pharisees could not bring themselves to admit the miracles of which they were witnesses. They hated the Lord so much that they chose rather to give the praise and credit to the powers of Satan. A great sermon could be preached about what the Lord said next, but what of this great sin of the Pharisees? Jesus said:” Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” (Matthew 12:31, 32)

It won’t be possible in this short article to notice everything, but we do want to study some matters. We also realize that it is likely some will not agree regardless of any position taken. In previous articles we noticed that any sin one could repent of could be forgiven, and we produced Scripture for that (see the November and December editorials). However, it appears here that possibly there is a sin which, once committed, is unforgivable. As a young man we worried about perhaps having committed the unforgivable sin, perhaps you did as well. However, it would seem that if one is worried about it, he isn’t guilty.

The Pharisees were eyewitnesses of the miracles Christ performed. They saw the lame walk, they heard the dumb speak; and in some cases, they also saw the dead raised. How could they deny such notable miracles? The facts were plain and before their very eyes. Yet, they denied what they saw and heard and chose rather to give the praise to the powers of Satan. God’s anger was so aroused that those guilty were allowed to know they would never be forgiven. The Lord said, “neither in this world, neither in the world to come.” {Verse 32} Many scholars understand this to mean not in the Jewish age (which was then) and also not in the Christian age which was yet to come and in which we live. Perhaps some of those present, and guilty, might live to see the Christian age come into effect but would still not be forgiven. How terrible! But why could they not be forgiven? We

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QUERIST COLUMN

By *RONNY F. WADE*

Question: Is it scriptural for a congregation to withdraw from someone who is a member of another congregation?

Answer: The discipline of the ungodly is the responsibility of every congregation. Those churches that fail to give attention to the misconduct of their members fail in their responsibility as good stewards. It is the obligation of elders, who rule over the flock, to not only feed the flock of God, but to also discipline wayward members. They are admonished to take the "oversight of the flock of God which is among you" 1 Peter 5:12. To "take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" Acts 20:28. Roy Cogdill correctly observes "They can exercise discipline only within the congregation where they are elders. 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; II Thessalonians 3:6. These instructions were given to a local church. There is no place in the New Testament scriptures where God gave elders any jurisdiction over members of another congregation. They are responsible only for those whom they "rule" Hebrews 13:17. It is noteworthy, as brother Cogdill points out, that apostasy in New Testament days began by elders extending their authority beyond the limits prescribed by the word of God. Suppose, however, that the person withdrawn from had in time past been a member of the church that executed the discipline, would this make any difference? In my view, it would make no difference unless the person left because discipline was about to be administered. In such a case the church administering the discipline should notify any receiving congregation of the facts. James South in his book Church Discipline, God's Gift For A Healthier Holier Church makes the following point "...the context of all discipline described in the New Testament is the local church. Discipline is never an institutional process by which a multi-location organization passes sentence on someone's actions. Rather, it is always brothers and sisters within the local church approaching a sinning fellow member in order to seek to reclaim them for Christ." Reclaiming someone for Christ is very important, in fact it is one of the primary reasons for church discipline in the first place. I have on occasion asked brethren "how many of you have gone to see this individual and tried to get

them to return to the church?" Unfortunately of those I asked, not a single one had tried to restore them. It almost seems that some people feel that "we finally got rid of him." No wonder Paul admonished the Corinthian church "But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent, not to be too severe. This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow" 2 Cor. 2:5-7. Here the apostle has reference to the man of 1 Cor. 5 from whom fellowship was withdrawn because of his immorality. Having repented the church is now encouraged to "receive him back." We should sincerely seek to restore those from whom fellowship has been withdrawn, by appealing to them to repent. Withdrawing fellowship should never be used to "get even" with someone or to prove our power over them. Its design is purely for the purpose saving the church and the guilty individual. It is shameful when practiced for any other reason. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

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...AND BAPTISM

By GREG GRAY

In previous articles, we have explored the steps toward salvation of Faith, Repentance, and Confession. In this article, we turn our attention to the wonderful subject of Baptism.

God provides the gift of salvation to the world in His grace, mercy, and love. His part of providing a path for our salvation was planned from the foundation of the world. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:18-20).

A study of the Bible indicates the only appropriate response to God's grace includes obeying the gospel in order to be saved, which is then to be followed by a faithful life as a Christian. Paul writes of the predestination of God in the sacrifice of Christ, the central theme of the gospel of our salvation. "In Him [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory in Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:11-14 NKJV).

The word of truth reveals we are saved when we obey the gospel through the equally important and essential steps of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism to receive the forgiveness of our sins. Since all these steps are necessary, we cannot be saved by choosing to obey any less than all. Contrary to what is often taught in modern religion, it is not scriptural to believe we can be saved by faith alone, any more than it is appropriate to believe we can be saved by repentance alone, or confession alone, or by baptism alone.

It is interesting that all of the initial requirements of salvation are presented in scripture as equal in importance to at least one other requirement of salvation. The reason we can know of the equality is the power and meaning of the word Kai, usually translated "and" in the scriptures.

The word *kai* is a conjunction that is used over 9,000 times in the New Testament. While it has several variations in meaning and application we will only look at the two primary ways that *kai* connects individual words. *Kai* is defined by Strong's as "a primary particle, having a copulative [i.e. to connect] and sometimes also a cumulative force..."

We see the copulative or connective use of the word in the following examples in the plan of salvation. In Mark 16:16 we see the combination of faith and (*kai*) baptism. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16: 16).

In Acts 2:38 we see the combination of repentance and (*kai*) baptism. "Then Peter said unto them, 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).

In Romans 10:9, we see the combination of confession and (*kai*) faith. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9). We see an example of how this is to be obeyed in Acts 8:37-38 when we observe Phillip the evangelist requiring the Ethiopian eunuch to publicly confess his belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God before he could be baptized for the forgiveness of his sins.

Remember, Strong's defines the word *kai* as "a primary particle, having a copulative and sometimes also a cumulative force. "When *kai* is used in a copulative or connective sense, it means the words joined are of equal weight. If *kai* is used to indicate cumulative force there could be an indication one item is more important than the other.

In the verses on salvation cited above, the most obvious meaning of the use of *kai* is connective, to join words of equal weight and value. Imagine though, that a writer believes the false doctrine of "faith only" as the means of salvation. Of necessity, the verses on salvation would be presented very differently. Here is an example of how to take Mark 16:16 and to twist the verse to ignore baptism.

Ian Thomason comments on Mark 16:16, "It is crucially important to understand that the "being baptized" component remains secondary to the "believing" component, as (1) the Greek coordinate conjunction translated "and" functions in a cumulative rather than in a copulative sense, and (2) that this remains a normal role of the second protasis [the first part of an if-then

statement] in implied conditional Greek sentences. In other words, a lack of baptism will not lead to a lack of eternal life. The same, of course, is true for the oft-quoted Acts 2:38 proof-text” (<https://www.scribd.com/document/122764801/Mark-16-An-Exegetical-Essay>).

If the author wanted *kai* to be cumulative in an attempt to show the sequence of repentance preceding baptism, that would be completely understandable. However, the author appears to arbitrarily assign a false meaning of *kai* in this passage due to a biased desire to ignore baptism as essential to salvation.

Bear with me in some rather complicated musing. Let us presume for a moment the author above is correct, that we can only obey Mark 16:16 if we honor faith as the only essential item in the verse and it is perfectly acceptable to ignore baptism. Our logic in doing so would be that faith is the first item listed in the verse, the item of emphasis, and because *kai* must be understood as cumulative. Then, a logical conclusion would be that it is appropriate to ignore baptism as nonessential. That is exactly what faith-only adherents want the scriptures to mean.

However, we could not stop with that one verse on salvation. We would need to force the same interpretation on Acts 2:38 so *kai* is not connective, but cumulative to honor repentance and enable us to ignore baptism.

It would also mean that a cumulative *kai* forced into the meaning of Romans 10:9 demands that all would honor confession and it would be fine to ignore the second item listed and linked by *kai*. In this passage the second item listed happens to be faith. Wait a minute! That circle of reasoning turns all the way around to make Faith non-essential for the “faith only” adherent. Of course that cannot be, which leaves those who twist the scriptures having no valid reason for their cumulative *kai* in Mark 16:16.

Rather than allow such nonsense to confuse what is easily understood, perhaps this simple reminder can help. Vines reports that *kai* is, “a conjunction, usually a mere connective, meaning “and”; it frequently, however, has an ascensive or climactic use, signifying “even,” the thing that is added being out of the ordinary, and producing a climax. The determination of this meaning depends on the context.”

If we untwist the meaning of *kai* in Mark 16: 16 and put it back as the context demands, as a connective conjunction, all becomes easily understood in the various scriptures that tell us how to be saved. Then, there is no attempt to eliminate baptism. Instead, it is

honored just as much as every other step of salvation.

Lenski observes the importance of baptism in Mark 16:16, “...For one thing, faith and baptism always go together; the moment a man believes he will want and will have baptism. By believing he clings to the gospel, and part of that gospel is baptism. But believing is subjective, the act of baptism is objective. They go together in this way Baptism cannot, therefore, be a mere sign or symbol that bestows nothing. If it were no more it could not be so vitally connected with salvation. Baptism bestows and the believing baptized person accepts and receives this great ‘salvation’ from the Savior. For anyone who comes to faith baptism is the great means of grace, i.e., the channel by which forgiveness, life, and salvation are bestowed upon him. As he believes the word, so he will demand all that the word promises in baptism and thus the baptismal act itself. He who claims to believe but refuses and rejects baptism most surely deceives himself about believing; his could be only a highly pathological faith...In the negative statement, nothing is said about being baptized simply because nothing needs to be said...By disbelieving the gospel he disbelieves also the baptism which is a part of it, hence he will refuse to be baptized...” (Vol. 2, pg. 766-7).

Having the steps pertaining to salvation declared equal in importance does not prevent a logical and necessary sequence of those items in pursuing our salvation. We understand the importance of following a sequence of equally important steps very easily in other areas of life. For example, no one who is thinking correctly puts an empty cake pan into a hot oven and expects a cake to be in the pan at the end of the prescribed cooking time. We know we have to do certain things first, such as combine specific ingredients and pour them into the pan before putting the pan into the oven.

Similarly, we cannot imagine God’s plan of salvation separate from an understanding of God’s word. This is deliberate on God’s part. “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1 :27-29).

Since God does not allow any person to glory, or boast, in His presence, it is impossible to use our own intellect to imagine what we must do to be saved. It is impossible to know how to be saved separate from God’s chosen means of communication with mankind, the Bible. “But

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THE DUMBING DOWN continued from page one

In regards to Doctrine, I am very concerned that current generations are losing their ability to discern scriptural principles and understand thoroughly why such heed is to be taken and why so much of the modern ideology (religious innovations) is to be rejected and opposed.

In the last few years, I have embraced the use of power point as an aid to teaching, but do you realize that technology like power point can be taken too far in an assembly of the Church? Do you know why it would be ill advised to embed videos into a power point that's to be used to teach in the Assembly? Because the principles of "the teaching" in 1 Corinthians 14 prevents it. An address "in the church" is to be done by one that has "come together" Such a "coming together" involves a physical bodily presence, not a virtual audio or video presence. Video conferencing, satellite campuses, and remote streaming will never be a scriptural or acceptable practice of the faithful Church because of that Biblical principles contained within assembling of ourselves together. People respond, "why not?" "I don't see anything wrong with it." Exactly my point. Without a clear understanding as to "why," we become ripe to embrace the unscriptural practices of the past and be led away from God. We become susceptible to the "fair speeches of men" (Ro.16:18) and "being tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine" (Eph.4:14). Do you know why you should oppose innovations in religion? Let me offer a few reasons.

1. Innovations in religion are condemned because we are admonished to neither "add to" or "take from" the word of God. John said in Revelation 22:18, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add to the things written in the book, God will add to him the plagues that are written in the book, and if any man shall take away from the words of the prophecy of this book, then God shall take away his part out of the book of life, out of the holy city, and from the things written in this book." Paul also wrote to the Corinthians to keep the ordinances "as" they had been delivered (1 Cor.11:2). Paul again said that we are to stand fast in the traditions that we have been taught ... by the epistles (2 Thess.2:15). The initial body of saints in Jerusalem remained "steadfast in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). If indeed the scriptures are able to thoroughly furnish us to all good works (2 Tim.3:16,17), then we need to addition to it to improve our spiritual position. All innovations are added to what is written.

2. Innovations exalt man and diminish God. Paul said we are NOT to think of men beyond what is written (1 Cor.4:6). When we have very good reason why to scripturally oppose a practice but adopt it anyway, we in effect tell God that we know better than him. Take for instance the modern Sunday School or "Bible Classes." Do you know why the class system is unscriptural? Primarily because when the church comes together and when we are "in the church" ie. we are performing the function of the Church's teaching and edifying ourselves as a body under this divine charge, we are told that we may all prophesy (ie. teach) one by one that "all" may learn and "all" may be comforted (1 Cor.14:31) and the women are to "keep silent" for they are not permitted to speak (1 Cor.14:34, 35). That passage demands that the body be edified in a single undivided assembly, for the only way that one man can speak where all are learning and being comforted is for the whole Church to be in one assembly. For the Church to call itself together and then divide itself by class is to go beyond what God said and exalt ourselves over his instruction. I do accept the private/public analysis and argument but there's more to understanding the Sunday School question or Bible Class issue than just whether something is public or private. If my family had a congregation meeting in our home, I, my wife, and three children could assemble together for worship. I could, by contrast, have the very same gathering of people, at the same exact time of the week, on the exact same day, for a family devotional or Bible study. In the context of a family study we could have an "open" discussion but not in the context of the church assembly. "In the Church" (ie.worship) my wife could not speak to our children to teach them, but in our "family study" she could. Why? Because of the issues of capacity (role), function, and under whose authority. In the "worship" I would be acting to carry out God's divine charge for the church, but in the "family study" I would be acting to carry out God's divine charge for the family. Same man, same actions, but different capacity or role. The same is true regarding function and authority I might as a minister arrange to meet a few families at the building for a study. Did I create a Sunday School? No, I have not. The Church as a body is not acting in that instance. I am not acting in the capacity of the church. I am acting under my own authority of teaching "from house to house" or what we as a brotherhood have all come to accept as "privately," singly as a brother or minister of the gospel. Just understanding public and private is not enough, we also have to understand the issues of when we are "in the church" and when we are not; of when we are acting under the direction or authority that God has given the Church and when we're not; or of when we are discharging the church's function or acting in our own individual function. We

don't have church colleges, orphan's homes, schools and hospitals for these very same reasons. God didn't put the church as an organization or body in the remedial reading business. Is it important for people to read? Absolutely. Paul said, "whereby when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4). Is it the function and role of the church to teach people to read and therefore create schools? Absolutely not. It matters not how much "good" may be done or how well intended it may be etc etc. It's a matter of God knows best. Back to the Sunday School. Do you realize that when the Church embraces the mission of teaching children in a "Sunday School" that the arrangement enables parents to shirk their duty of bringing their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Do you see how the family unit could be strengthened if Fathers and Mothers were encouraged to shoulder their responsibilities of teaching their children instead of shifting that responsibility to the church? Do you realize that James commanded us as individual saints to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction" (Js.1:27) and didn't instruct the Church to undertake that work through an institution funded with the Lord's money? When we alter the Scripture, we tell God that we know best, not him. We want a King!

3. One innovation leads to more innovations. Whatever "argument" you use to justify one innovation, the same argument will be used to justify all innovations. This gets into a discussion of generic and specific authority which is way beyond the scope of this article. Suffice it to say that all innovations stand or fall together

4. Innovations destroy the basis of Christian Unity. Paul said there is, one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one Faith, one Hope, one Baptism, and one Body (Eph.4:3-6). Here is the great platform of unity in Christian faith and practice. We can join together on a "thus saith the Lord." We will never unite on anything beyond what is written.

5. Innovations violate the law of silence. Many wrongly think that if God hasn't specifically condemned something in the Bible then he, by default, has allowed it, when in reality when it comes to the jurisdiction, practice, and function of the church in its work, mission, and purpose in this world, if God hasn't allowed something (either by generic or specific authority) then he by necessity has forbidden it. The law of silence demands it. If you called up Sears and said I want to order a washer and dryer but they delivered and billed you for a washer and dryer, a dishwasher, a vacuum cleaner and a lawn mower, you would probably object. If they said, "WELL YOU DIDN'T SAY NOT TO." You'd think

they'd lost their minds. Same is true with the will of God. God didn't have to tell us all what "not" to do. When he instructed us what to do in the work, worship, mission, and purpose of the Church, then all that's not specifically or generically authorized is forbidden by the law of silence. As an example, God commanded us to sing and make melody in our hearts (Eph.5:19; Col 3:16). He designated the heart as the instrument upon which the melody is to be made. By silence, God forbids the use of any other type of music (instrumental) to be made or any other instrument (mechanical) to be used beside the heart. By specific instruction God says we are to use vocal music where melody is made in our hearts or where we sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. Is instrumental music scriptural? No, you have to add instrumental music without God's permission.

Remember, my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge, and The Dumbing Down of America Is Complete.

WERE TIMOTHY AND TITUS "PASTORS"?

By DAVID GRIFFIN

It is truly remarkable how many people give an unequivocal affirmative answer to the above question, even those who otherwise seem to have a great deal of Bible knowledge. As only one example, I'm thinking of those popular radio preachers of the evangelical community whose voices are broadcasted all over the country and even the entire world. Their preaching across the airwaves from the letters to Timothy and Titus begins and proceeds on the assumption that both these men were "Pastors" in the respective congregations where they labored. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that both this assumption and the teaching stemming from it are in error, and thus those churches of Christ who want to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent" should avoid this error.

The term pastor appears only once in the New King James Version (and the old version) of the New Testament. Ephesians 4: 11 says, "And He Himself [Christ] gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." "Pastors" are merely mentioned by name in this passage, but their specific work and who in the New Testament filled this position cannot be determined from the verse itself. The only means we have of identifying such persons and their work is by examining the meaning of the term pastor in Ephesians 4: 11, and from there searching the Scriptures for clues identifying who did indeed serve in this position.

The word “pastor” in Ephesians 4: 11 is rendered from the Greek word *poimen* (pronounced, poy MAIN). This word occurs eighteen times in the New Testament and each time is translated by the English word “shepherd” except Ephesians 4:11 where the KJV translators, because of their affinity for the Latin version of the scriptures, chose to render it with the Latin word for shepherd (“pastor”) instead of the English word “shepherd.” Therefore, “pastors” in Ephesians 4:11 simply means shepherds. Thus, the meaning “shepherd” is our chief clue for identifying from elsewhere in the New Testament what the work of the pastor is and what the nature of his office is.

Two New Testament passages use language that is plainly “pastoral” in nature as it pertains to officers in the church. The first passage is 1 Peter 5:1-4. “The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am also an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion, but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords of those entrusted to you, but examples of the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of glory that does not fade away”

Peter addresses the “elders who are among you” (also called “overseers”) and says that he himself is “also an elder.” The fact that Peter, an apostle, says “I am also an elder” indicates that there is some overlap in the functions of apostles and elders. However, Peter, writing with apostolic voice and authority, addresses a group separate from himself called “elders” who were not apostles and gives them specific instructions pertaining to their work as such.

Concerning that work, Peter writes: “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you” (v 2), The KJV reads “feed the flock” (often understood as “teach” the church). This is an unfortunate translation because its meaning is too narrow. “Feeding” (or “teaching”) a congregation is only a small part of the work of “shepherding” and does not embrace the full scope of meaning in the verb. The verb in the original is *poimaino* (pronounced poi-MY no), and its similarity to the noun *poimen* (shepherd or pastor) referenced above is obvious. Hence, “*poimen*” is a shepherd; “*poimaino*” is “do the work of a shepherd.” The lexicon defines the actions embraced in this verb relative to the church officer as that of “watching out for other people, to shepherd ..of activity that rules, governs, fosters . .in the sense of lead, guide, or rule” (BDAG 3rd Edition 2000). This sense would naturally include, among other things, “teaching” the congregation. While the New King James Version fittingly retains the metaphor of “shepherding,” perhaps

an even better rendering would be “lead,” “guide,” or “rule.” Hence, “lead, guide, rule that flock which is among you.” At any rate, the rendering “shepherd the flock” (NKJV) seems an improvement over “feed the flock” (KJV). Hence, these elders are to “shepherd,” by leading, guiding, and ruling, which by implication would of course include but not be limited to “feeding (or teaching) the flock” or congregation that is “among them.”

Second, Acts 20:28 contains Paul’s directives to the elders of the church at Ephesus: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock,” Paul says, “among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood.” Paul tells these elders “to shepherd the church of God.” The verb for “shepherd” is the same here as that used by Peter above--*poimaino*. As in 1 Peter 5, the old version translates this verb as “feeding,” and for the reasons cited above the newer rendering “shepherd” is an improvement. Hence, these “elders” (v 17), also called “overseers” (v 28), like those addressed by Peter, were instructed to perform the work of “pastors” among the Lord’s people whom they thus served.

Having identified the office and work of those called “pastors” in Ephesians 4:11 as that of those who elsewhere are called “elders” and “overseers,” we now notice the organizational relationship these pastors sustained to the churches within which they labored. The New Testament consistently represents elders or overseers (hence pastors) as a plurality of men within a congregation, who as a group “shepherd” or “rule” the congregation of their charge. To illustrate, Paul and Barnabas “ordained elders in every church” (Acts 14:23); Peter addressed “the elders which are among you” (1 Peter 5:1-4); Paul called for the “elders,” “overseers” (pastors) of the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:28); Paul told Timothy to “let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor” (1 Tim. 5:17); Paul addressed the “elders and deacons” in the congregation at Philippi (Phil. 1:1); and finally Paul tells Titus to ordain or appoint “elders in every city” (Titus 1:5). These passages demonstrate a consistent pattern of the plurality of elders/overseers/pastors within the respective congregations where they served.

By contrast, the New Testament scriptures know nothing of a congregation of the Lord’s people with a “Pastor” (singular) shepherding them. Although this practice is accepted without question and is universally adopted in denominations all over the world, no man is called “The Pastor” of a church anywhere in the New Testament!

That Timothy and Titus performed leadership roles at Ephesus and on the island of Crete respectively is of course obvious. That the leadership role they performed

was that of “The Pastor” is not so obvious. The pastoral language used regarding the work of elders/overseers/pastors in the passages quoted above is completely absent from the letters to Timothy and Titus in which Paul describes their work in much detail. If Timothy and Titus were each “The Pastor” of the congregations where they labored, occupying the prominent role popularly associated with that title today, should we not expect to find in Paul’s letters to these men at least one instance of pastoral language like that used of the elders in 1 Peter 5 and Acts 20? Such language however simply does not occur in these letters.

Now someone may rebut that the work Paul describes in the letters to Timothy and Titus is pastoral in nature even if the verb *poimaino* or the noun *poimen* does not appear in these books; therefore, they served as “The Pastor” in those churches. But this is over generalizing. While it is true that there is overlap in all the offices Paul names in Ephesians 4:11—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers—it is also true that Paul does itemize them separately. Not only that, but the distinction between these offices is even more emphatic by the presence of the pronoun “some”—i.e. “he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers”—that is, some are one, some are another, and some yet another. Thus, while there will inevitably be overlap in the work of these offices, it is also true there is obvious distinction and separation. Accordingly, we should expect him to maintain such distinctions in his other epistles, especially those to Timothy and Titus.

Not surprisingly then we find Paul doing just that. First, as stated above, we have no statement from Paul calling Timothy or Titus “The Pastor” of a church. Second, the letters in which we would expect them to be thus called contain no explicit pastoral language used of true pastors elsewhere in the New Testament. Third, it is most significant that in addressing Timothy, Paul explicitly tells him to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5), and the “evangelist” is of course one of the very positions listed in Ephesians 4: 11, in addition to and separate from “the pastors.” Incidentally, since there is obvious similarity between the work of Timothy and Titus, we may safely infer that Titus was also doing the work of an evangelist. And last, far from instructing these men to “do the word of the Pastor,” Paul rather tells them either to “ordain elders [or pastors] in every city” (as in the case of Titus) or of addressing and correcting problems within an already existing eldership (as in the case of Timothy).

In conclusion, Timothy therefore was not “The Pastor” of the church at Ephesus, and Titus was not “The Pastor” of a church (or churches) on the island of Crete. These men were evangelists. The burden of proof that they served as “The Pastor” rests with those multiplied

thousands of men (and a few women) today who claim this title, wielding a powerful influence over the consciences of millions, while claiming to be “called of God” to occupy an office about which the New Testament knows nothing. -D. Griffin.

...AND BAPTISM continued from page five

without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).

The source of faith is not miraculous, neither is it hidden. It is clearly revealed for “Whosoever will” to find (Revelation 22:17). Paul declares, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

The steps of salvation can be compared to a logical journey toward our destination of salvation. When we hear the word of God, it produces faith in the willing heart (Hebrews 11:6). That alone does not mean we are saved, but it does prompt us to obey God’s will.

Next on our journey is the step of repentance (Acts 2:38, Luke 13:3,5). Our heart is filled with Godly sorrow for our offenses toward God and a determination to change our life. Faith plus repentance are both necessary, but they do not yet mean we are saved.

The next stop on our journey is the Good Confession where we echo the words of the Ethiopian Eunuch before his baptism (Acts 8:37), the same confession that Timothy made before many witnesses prior to his baptism (1 Timothy 6:12), that “Jesus Christ is the son of God.” The steps of faith, repentance and confession are all necessary, but they do not yet mean we are saved.

Baptism is last on our journey in our quest to be saved (Mark 16:16). Our baptism is when we are briefly completely buried in water in a likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-5) for the forgiveness of our sins (Acts 2:38). The Apostle Peter declares this final step of immersion “doth also now save us.” (1 Peter 3:21).

For any who are hesitant to insist that baptism must be part of the plan of salvation, please look again at the scriptures in their elegance and simplicity. Baptism for the remission of sins is essential to salvation. To believe and teach otherwise is to preach a false doctrine and to lead people astray instead of into a saved relationship with God through Christ. 5109 Chicago Ave., Fair Oaks, CA 95628 papagreg@aol.com. OPA

THE SIN AGAINST.... continued from page two

can't know all the answers since they are not furnished here. However, consider this: What additional evidence could God have given to these people to prove Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God? What would it take to produce faith in their hearts? There was nothing left! John said in John 20:20,21, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name." It is unthinkable that some of the Pharisees spoken of in Matthew 12 and Mark 3 were not also witnesses of some of the numerous miracles John speaks of here. Yet, they were not convinced and they refused to accept that the miracles came from above. Hence, they will never be forgiven. Was it because God would not ever forgive? Probably not, it was more likely that God could not forgive because there was no way to ever bring these Pharisees to repentance. They had rejected, with a high hand, His every proof. Oh, I think they knew better; but like many a stubborn man in an argument, would deny and make even absurd statements such as the Pharisees did about Christ doing this by the devil. Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible (note the word impossible DLK) to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

What about us today? May we also commit this terrible sin? For a number of years now we have believed the answer to that question is "no." The Pharisees were eyewitnesses and we cannot be. We believe the Lord did those great miracles by faith, but those people rejected the obvious out of stubbornness and hatred in spite of their eyewitness experience.

Recently, we came across an article written by Alexander Campbell in Volume 6 of the Millennial Harbinger in 1842, page 6. It reads, in part: "...The reason why this renunciation and blasphemy of the Spirit never can be forgiven is, as it appears to me, because he that commits it can never repent of it. This is also evident from the fact that all the goodness of God is so sinned against that there is no attitude in which it can be placed before the mind that can lead it to repentance. The Spirit, of course offended, leaves off all farther strivings with its calumniator; and then the Spirit being the last divine agent, no one succeeding it, it is impossible to renew such a one to repentance. **It is however, questionable whether now such a sin is at all possible;** (emphasis mine DLK) the Spirit not now appearing in such miraculous demonstrations as formerly, and therefore not calling forth such an opposition or blasphemy. If I could write a volume on the subject, I would do little more than simplify and place in diverse attitudes what

is imported and implied in this paragraph." This seems reasonable to our mind.

Think on these things. DLK

Announcement

EFFORT IN SOUTH KOREA - Do you speak Korean or have relatives that live in South Korea interested in the gospel? We may need your help. Please pray that the Lord's work in the Pohang-si area of South Korea will prosper. In March the Edmond, Oklahoma congregation will be initiating an evangelistic effort in this area, Lord willing. If you have contacts in this area or other areas of South Korea please send info to Glen Osburn at glenosburn@gmail.com immediately. Thanks in advance for your cooperation in prayer.

FOR PUBLICATION OF MATERIAL - The Lord willing we will be out of the Country by the time this issue is in your hands. Until March 15, send all material to Ronny F. Wade, P.O. Box 14352, Springfield, MO 65814. Email ronnywade36@gmail.com After that date resume sending to me as usual. Our thanks to Brother Wade for handling the publishing responsibilities during this time. DLK

Our Departed

MEARS: Verla Louise Mears was born July 27, 1936 in Mountain Grove, MO and passed away on Nov. 28, 2016 at the age of 80. She was born to Clate and Edna Rogers, her dear parents, and was married to Lonnie L. Mears in 1956. They resided in Kansas City, KS until 1985, at which time they moved to Springfield, MO to enjoy their retirement in the Ozarks. She is survived by her husband of 60 years, a daughter- Deanna Harris of Overland Park, KS, a grandson- Gavin Harris of Overland Park, KS, a brother Verlin Rogers of Mountain Grove, MO, a sister- Shirley Cook of Bolivar MO, as well as nieces, nephews and friends who will all miss her dearly. She was preceded in death by a daughter- Linda Louise Mears, a brother- Arlie Rogers, and a sister- Janis Dean. She obeyed the gospel many years ago, being baptized into Christ by Wayne Fussell, and she remained faithful to the Lord throughout her life. At the time of her death, she was a member of the Pleasant View congregation on the north side of Springfield. Verla loved life, loved to laugh, and had an infectious smile that could light up a room. Being a person of dignity, modesty, meekness, and integrity, she was the epitome of what a godly woman is suppose to be. Just like the description of the "virtuous woman" in Provo 31 :27-28, the following equally applied to her- "She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up, and call

her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.” Along with Irvin Barnes (an elder of the Pleasant View congregation who first met Verla as a young man) and Kendall Cook (a nephew who shared precious memories with us on behalf of the family), I was honored to be one of the speakers. Deanna’s husband, Gregory Harris, led the beautiful congregational singing. While we are saddened by the passing of our dear sister in Christ, we “sorrow not,” as Paul put it in 1 Thess. 4:13, “as others which have no hope.” We long to see her again “in the resurrection at the last day” (John 11 :24)! Interment was in the Hazelwood Cemetery on the south side of Springfield where she shall come forth in the morning of the resurrection. May the Lord hasten that day.

-Billy Dickinson

Field Reports

Carl M. Johnson - 1400 Northcrest Drive, Ada, OK 74820 cmjthebackpage@gmail.com Dec. 7, 2016. We have finished our meetings schedule for the year and look forward to the Oklahoma New Year’s Meeting. Since my last report I have conducted meetings in Springfield, MO (Pleasant View congregation), Broken Arrow, OK, and Jamesville, MO. At the end of October I also attended the annual study in Shreveport, LA. This study is hosted by the Queensborough congregation and directed by Bob Cunningham. The building was packed at the services I attended and the presentations I heard on “Difficult Passages From the New Testament,” were excellent. I had not seen some of the preachers in attendance in several years and it was good to be with them. Our meetings schedule from March through October of 2016 took us almost exclusively to the eastern half of the country. We fulfilled appointments in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Georgia, Alabama, Missouri, and Oklahoma. Attendance at all of these meetings was good—exceeding my expectations in nearly every place. Brethren worked to bring friends and neighbors to the services. I did my best to preach the Gospel to them, and to strengthen the brethren as well. Phyllis and I are grateful for the wonderful hospitality we received during our travels. I continue to preach 3-5 services each month here at home, and also have some Sunday appointments at area congregations during the winter months. We have a full schedule of meetings for 2017 beginning in March. Please pray for us. My God bless and keep you all.

Frank Brancato - 12718 Larkin Drive, Bakersfield, CA 93312. November 22, 2016, email: frankbrancato@sbcglobal.net. The work here in Bakersfield is progressing along and the church is growing. We have had visitors attend just about every Sunday and a number of private Bible studies are taking place. We have had 8 baptisms here in the last 8 months, and we

give God all of the glory In addition, another brother from a digressive church in the area has taken his stand with us. This brother is the fifth person that has left error for the truth, and we are very encouraged by that. If the Lord permits, my preaching schedule for December and January will be as follows: December 9-11 Yuba City California January 1st, 21st Street, OKC January 4th - 25th, Philippines with Brother Don King. I am really looking forward to another trip to the Philippines with Don. It is one of the greatest works in the world, and I am very thankful to be a small part of it. This will be my 8th trip in 11 years Lord willing, and I pray that it is a safe and fruitful one. Please remember us when you pray and may the Lord bless His faithful everywhere!

Billy D. Dickinson - 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com, Dec. 16. As I write this report, it’s hard to believe that only a few days are left in 2016. While it has been a busy year for me, I am now eagerly anticipating 2017 and pray that the Lord will continue to bless me in my evangelistic efforts. Lord willing, I plan to attend the Oklahoma New Year’s Meeting, which I haven’t attended in a while, and I know that will be a wonderful way to end the old year and begin a new one. The annual study at Columbia, MO will take place on the dates of March 13-17 and they have asked me to preach for them on that Sunday before it actually begins. I always enjoy being with this congregation because their zeal is contagious and their hospitality is grand. This, of course, is where Shahe Gergian lives and labors. Clint DeFrance also plays a major role in organizing the study and assigning topics to various preachers. My topic has to do with “the good confession” this year. I am also looking forward to a meeting in Indianapolis, IN on the dates of April 5-9. I’m glad to report that we recently had a baptism here at Jamesville. It is always a time of rejoicing when someone obeys the gospel, but it is especially touching to see a young person step forward and dedicate their entire life to serving God. May our new sister in Christ grow in grace and knowledge in the years ahead, enjoying a long life of service in the kingdom of Christ! Brethren, let’s do all that we can to save souls in 2017!

Ronny Wade - P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com. Since last reporting we have been busy preaching on the week-ends at places near home. The churches in our area are at peace and working together in advancing the cause of Christ. The Lord willing we are looking forward to attending the New Year meeting in Dothan, AL and seeing the many Christians that attend this meeting every year. Our work, the Lord willing, will resume shortly after the new year in gospel meetings beginning at Temple, GA Feb. 23-26. Make plans to attend this effort if you can. The Lord bless all those preachers who will be traveling this next year as they do their their best to enlarge the borders of Zion.

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THE BACK PAGE...

STILL ALIVE AT 85

By CARL M. JOHNSON

This issue marks the 85th birthday of Old Paths Advocate. The journal began officially in January of 1932, with Homer L. King as publisher, H.E. Robertson as assistant publisher and an editorial staff consisting of brethren King, Homer A. Gay, J.D. Phillips, and H.C. Harper Brother Harper. actually began publishing the journal four years earlier under the name of The Truth. He eventually brought brother Phillips onboard as an editor in 1930, and added brother King to the staff a little later. Near the end of 1931 Harper decided to turn the publisher's job over to a younger man because of his own failing health. After a great deal of contemplation, Harper and Phillips decided the 39 year old King was the best choice to assume the task. It was a wise choice. As the late Clovis Cook remarked, Brother King was the right person in the right place at the right time, much like Esther of the Old Testament (Esther 4.14).

The paper was conceived as a voice crying out in the wilderness against unscriptural innovations that inundated the church around the turn of the 20th Century. The innovations included the use of instrumental music in worship, missionary societies, Sunday schools, and individual communion cups.

Since Gutenberg's invention of the removable-type printing press in the 15th Century the printed page had been the most effective medium for disseminating information to large populations of people. By the end of the 19th Century, a multitude of religious journals were circulating in the USA, but it was Old Paths Advocate that galvanized and added our voice to that circulation.

Eighty-five years later the paper is still inextricably linked to our brotherhood. A few years ago I purchased a volume titled, Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement. This is a massive book of nearly 900 pages, containing from "A" to "Z" everything you want to know about the American Restoration Movement. I was disappointed to find our brotherhood has only one entry in the entire encyclopedia, but that entry is in connection with Old Paths Advocate. The entry on page 575 says, "Another periodical using the slogan to further its conservative views is the Old Paths Advocate, which has since 1929 articulated the views of churches opposing Sunday Schools and individual cups for the Lord's Supper"

Today in the midst of a mind-boggling electronic revolution, the printed page is gradually being replaced as the dominant medium for dispensing information to the masses. Newsprint publishers of all genres are facing hard times. Richard Tofel, former top executive with The Wall Street Journal, says print circulation of the largest U.S. newspapers has plunged at a far faster rate than expected in the last three years. The circulation for the Wall Street Journal is down 400,000, the New York Times is down 200,000, and the Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times are down 100,000.

Book publishers and booksellers are going out of business every day and so are many religious papers.

I clipped a cartoon out of a newspaper a few years ago that portrays the current situation pretty well. The cartoon shows a distinguished-looking elderly man sitting in a stuffed chair in his library while smoking a pipe. Another man is standing with his hands behind his back while looking at a massive bookcase against the wall. The bookshelves stretch from wall-to-wall and from floor to ceiling, but there are no books on the shelves. The shelves are completely empty with the exception of three small items on one shelf The man carefully examines these items and says, "Kindle, Nook, Sony Reader...I say Hardwick, this sure is an impressive library."

People pay hundreds of dollars a month for wireless, broadband, cell service, and their various digital devices. They skip around on the Internet, checking in with multiple sources to get their news. Consequently, most publishers of newspapers and religious journals have tried to keep up by setting up their own Web pages. I am happy to say the Old Paths Advocate has done just that and you can subscribe to and read the entire paper online at www.oldpathsadvocate.org.

I am not sure what effect the Internet age is going to have on the printed word. Do you suppose the printed page is eventually destined to join the ranks of clay tablets, scrolls, and typewritten pages, to be displayed in collectors' glass cases with other curious items of the distant past?

A few years ago I discussed this question at length with Dr Kerry Magruder curator of historical collections at the University of Oklahoma's Bizzell Library. He says he thinks there will always be a need for the printed page - as an original source reference.

Regardless of the dizzying changes the electronic revolution has made to the communication media, there remains one constant - the need to call those who have erred from the ancient Bible pattern back to the old paths. That is one reason I am thankful that while the OPA is 85, it is still alive. cmjthebackpage@gmail.com