

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. 11

IT TAKES A CHURCH

By CLINT DE FRANCE

The word church comes from the Greek *ekklesia*, popularly defined as the, “called out.” Often preachers will note that the church is composed of those who have been called out of the world, and insinuate that this is the meaning of the term church when it is used to speak of the people of God. Indeed, in the purest sense, *ekklesia* is a compound word of *ek* meaning “out of” and *kalleo* meaning “to call”, but the word itself means more than simply to call out, it properly means, “a gathering of citizens call out from their homes into some public place, an assembly” (Thayer). Thus, the *ekklesia* are the call out and called together. This is essential for a correct understanding of the Church.

Contemporary religion loves individualism, but there is no place for that in the concept of the Church. This is the fallaciousness of the contemporary jargon of Jesus as a personal savior. The Bible never uses such an expression. Although individuals must exercise personal faith and obedience to be saved, Jesus adds them to His Church (Acts 2:47) and it is the Church for which Jesus died (Eph. 5:25), and which Jesus purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Jesus does not save men and women to roam in spiritual solitude; he saves men and women to be a people unto Him, a unit.

It is for this reason that we present Christianity as an organized religion. All the terms and symbols used to describe the Church speak of its organizational quality. A.T. Robertson points out that when Jesus, in Matthew 16:18, says, “I will build my church” he mixes the metaphor of the assembly and the temple, that the church would

be a spiritual building, or structure. The word structure is synonymous with organization. The Apostle Peter uses this language in 1 Peter 2:5 when he says, “you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” And again the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:19-22, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

The organizational quality of Christianity is further established when the Bible speaks of the Church as “the body of Christ”. Notice Colossians 1:16-17, “All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Again, in verse 24, I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.” Now what is a body? It is an organism! You don’t get much more organized than that! “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.” (Eph. 5:23)

Furthermore, the church is spoken of as the Kingdom of Heaven and of God’s Dear Son (Matthew 16:19; Col. 1:13), and what is a kingdom? It is one people, with one law, under the dominion of one ruler! A corporate unit! For these reasons, those who desire to restore the ancient order of things plead with

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Editorial

TOLERANCE AND ROMANS 14

By DON L. KING

Now and then we encounter one who insists that Romans 14 directs the church to tolerate those who are liberal, worldly and carnal in their living. We are told that Paul instructs that the “weak” be “received” in his letter to the Romans.

Paul did indeed instruct that the weak be received in Romans 14:1. However, it is obvious that many are unaware of Paul’s subject. Can it be possible that the apostle intended us to simply be oblivious and uninterested in the sins of church members? Let us notice a few places where Paul’s meaning cannot be misunderstood. In 1 Corinthians 5:4-7 he said, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one (a fornicator verses 1, 2 DLK) unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.” In this writing, Paul plainly wants the immoral person removed from those who are still moral before the whole group becomes tainted by the sin. But someone says, “maybe he (the fornicator) is just weak. Why, if you withdraw from him (or her) you can never win them back! We need to maintain fellowship so that we can win them back.” That seems to be the reasoning of some but what does the apostle say? Deliver them to Satan! In other words, get them away from the church before others are harmed by their sin. Like it or not, church members are to stay away from those things. There is entirely too much association with immorality. Paul said, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” (1 Corinthians 15:33) Paul’s command to the church is “...not to company with fornicators.” (1 Corinthians 5:9) In verse 11 he said, “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother

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QUERIST COLUMN

By Ronny F. Wade

Question: At what age should a young person be baptized?

Answer: All people who are accountable to God for their conduct need to be baptized. The question that needs to be settled is “when do young people become accountable to God?” Since children mature at different rates, it is impossible, in my view, to declare a chronological age at which they should be baptized. Often very young children hear gospel sermons on the danger of being lost, the horrors of hell etc. and in order to avoid these things, they want to be baptized. This same child some hours later will act like the seven or eight year old he is, having already forgotten the sermon he heard earlier. Such situations represent an opportunity for parents to talk with their children about the responsibilities of being a Christian and the difference between going through the act of being immersed and truly becoming a child of God which includes the many duties of living the Christian life. It is also an opportunity to point out to the child, that babies and young children who have not reached the age of accountability are not lost and will not go to hell. In addition there are those who are not mentally capable of understanding the gospel, who will not be lost. Such conversations make it possible for parents to reassure their very young children that God loves them, and that they are not in danger of going to hell at that time. It is important that we teach our children the word of God from the earliest days of their life, so that when they do reach the proper age they will desire to become a Christian and dedicate their life to Christ. There are a number of things about baptism that will help us in coming to a better understanding of the age at which it should take place. First of all no one should be baptized who is not lost, and in danger of hell. Baptism is for condemned people. Are we willing to say that the seven, eight, nine year old child is lost? If not, then we should not encourage the child to be baptized. There is much more to being ready for baptism than merely being able to recite the plan of salvation. A bright five year old child can be taught that. Very young children can tell you that baptism will save or forgive their sins. Does this mean that this child is a sinner headed for hell should he or she die? Young children are easily influenced. When others are being baptized they

often want to be baptized as well. Another important point is to remember that no one is amenable to the gospel of Christ who is incapable of assuming the responsibilities connected with conversion. For example Jesus teaches in Mt. 10:37 and Luke 14:26 that anyone who loves father or mother more than Him is not worthy of Him. Can young children comprehend and obey this commitment? Is a young child physically, emotionally or socially capable of dealing with such a challenge? Paul declared that when we commune we are to discern the Lord’s body. Do young children know how to do this? Wayne Jackson in an article on this subject made the following observation: “The New Testament symbolically represents our union with Christ as a marriage (see Rom. 7:4; Eph 5:22ff). One’s relationship with the Son of God is the most important commitment he will ever have upon this earth. Why is it that some parents, who would never dream of allowing their small children to enter into a physical marriage, will, none the less, permit them to ‘get baptized’ simply because they are afraid that disallowing that urge would discourage the youngster from developing spiritual interests in the future? When we tell our immature children that they are ‘too young’ to date, do we entertain the illusion that such will deter them from ever wanting to marry? When a youngster prematurely asks for baptism, if the parents handle the matter gently and compassionately, the child will not be damaged spiritually.” This is such an important issue that we must be careful not make sweeping generalizations. No one is able to judge, based only on chronological age, whether or not someone else sufficiently understands the gospel. For this reason it is unwise to try and agree that everyone who reaches a certain age is ready for baptism, for such is obviously not the case. I have on several occasions re-baptized those who came to realize that they had been baptized, before they understood the gravity and purpose of what they were doing. It concerns me that some children, who have been baptized, curl up on their mothers lap and sleep during church service. Others, as soon as the dismissal prayer is finished rush out the back door to run, yell, and play with other children. Why not? That is what they are, they are still small children, yet they have been baptized. Something is wrong with this picture. May God help us to realize the seriousness of this matter and address it in a concerned scripturally sound way. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

HERE AND THERE

By RICK MARTIN

Fall is the perfect parable of all that fades. One day you may see the forest with its brilliant colors, but tomorrow the rain will fall, the wind will blow and strip the trees and leave them barren. Therefore every returning fall brings home to us the sense of the preciousness of life's opportunities, not only their beauty but also their brevity. Figuratively there are some things we must do with urgency. There are many voices that call to us, but soon they will be forever silent. Let us take our suggestion from Paul's farewell message to Timothy in far-away Ephesus. Come Before winter. 2 Tim. 4:21 Do thy diligence to come before winter. Eubulus greeteth thee, and Pudens, and Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.

My home congregation in Marietta started having an annual singing in 1994. Lynwood Smith came every year until he passed away in 2007. We now have Kevin Presley to come and help us out. The singing seems to be a highlight of the year and we usually have good crowds. I am happy to see that many other congregations are beginning to have singings. Brethren, why not try this out at your home congregation. I think you will enjoy it.

Speaking of singing, it is good to see that Johnny Elmore is able to get out more now. No doubt Johnny misses Sally very much, but I am thankful that God has allowed him to have the health to be able to resume traveling. There is nobody that can get more out of a crowd, as far as singing than Johnny. God bless you, Johnny.

I see a congregation in Texas is now advertising "workshops." I've worked in workshops and shopped where people work, but I've never read in the New Testament about a congregation having "workshops."

We have several brethren who have books of their writings that have been published. Don King has a book of editorials titled "Think on These Things"; Ronny Wade has a question and answer book titled, "If You Ask Me"; Joe Hisle has a sermon book - "Let No Man Despise Thy Youth"; two books by Tommy Shaw- "The Destruction of Jerusalem" and "The First Epistle to the Corinthians"; and Jerry Dickinson has "Retelling the Greatest Stories Ever

Told". I can't imagine any member of the Church not having all of these books in his/her library. If you need to order these books here is the contact information;

"Think on These Things"- mmartin@bellsouth.net

"If You Ask Me" - fergy1259@yahoo.com

"Let no man Despise Thy Youth" - kwpresley@gmail.com

"The Destruction of Jerusalem" and "The First Epistle to the Corinthians" tbartshaw@hotmail.com

"Retelling the Greatest Stories Ever Told" - misterjld@msn.com

If any of you preachers or church leaders have things of interest that are going on in your work, let me know. I would be happy to report it.

That's all for now; pray for the brotherhood.
Rick Martin, mmartin@bellsouth.net

FROM A BROTHER IN NIGERIA

By: Chidiebere Nwachukwu

Submitted by Rick Martin

It is amazing how times change. A couple of weeks ago two female college students visited our congregation. After worship they sought audience with me. One said that she had been a Christian for six years and mentioned a number of congregations she had visited in Nigeria and that all of them used the cups in worship, except ours. It occurred to me that we now have in the church a generation of Christians who do not know there was a time when the church knew nothing about cups... on the Lord's Table. The first time I saw the cups in the church in the 1980's, I was in shock. The first time I saw Sunday school classes in a church I had visited I went back to my village to worship that Sunday. But now the times are different. It is the true worship that shocks people.

It all shows that the Devil has been busy while many Christians, who ought to know better have gone into spiritual slumber. We need to awake and see that there always will be a remnant who has not bowed the knee to the "god of liberalism." We need to fight to see that we pass the true faith to our children. Each of us must get involved. - Chidiebere Nwachukwu
Evangelist at Church of Christ, Ibusa Road, Asaba.

ONE CUP AND “THE CHURCH” AT JERUSALEM

By CLINT DE FRANCE

Around 100 years ago, the use of individual cups in the Lord’s Supper made inroads into the churches of Christ. The original purpose was sanitation, but after introducing the practice, some advocates of multiple/individual cups searched for justification in the scripture. One of the most popular defenses is the allegation that because the church in Jerusalem had some 5,000 members, it would have not been possible for all to commune together from a common cup and loaf. From this premise we are told in spite of whatever apparent pattern we see in the three accounts of the Supper’s institution (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14, Luke 22), and Paul’s instruction to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 10 and 11) where it seems rather plain that a common cup and loaf were used by all assembled communicants, the “Jerusalem mega-church” implicitly authorizes the use of individual cups and loaves if a congregation finds it good or expedient.

At first this might seem a convincing argument, in that it would certainly be difficult, if not impossible, for 5,000+ people to drink from one cup, and we grant that if it could be proved that all the Christians in Jerusalem met together in one assembly it would be challenging to hold the “one-cup” position. But can it be proved that the Jerusalem church was a single, 5,000-member congregation? Or does the evidence lead us to conclude that the Christians in Jerusalem met in smaller congregations for corporate worship (i.e. the first day of the week assembly - Acts 20:7) perhaps house to house, in a setting where the single cup/single loaf would be easily practiced? There are a number of reasons why this writer believes that the mega-church theory is incorrect, and the multiple, house-church concept is more reasonable and scriptural.

The Jerusalem “Mega-Church” is Unnecessary

Most advocates of the single mega-church in

Jerusalem base their argument from the fact that the phrase “the church” is used in Acts 1-8. Since the singular is used, we are told we must conclude that there was only one congregation in Jerusalem. But is this grammatically necessary? A careful examination of the uses of the word church in the New Testament will show that it is not! It is generally agreed that the phrase “the church” may be used to speak of the universal body of all saved people in the world (Matt. 16:18), or of a local congregation (Acts 11:26). But there is also a third usage, to speak of the congregations in a certain area (i.e. the church in Missouri, the church in Texas, the Church in Russia). An example of this usage in the New Testament is found in Acts 9:31, “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.” (NASB) Garreth Reese makes the following comments on this passage –

“Some versions read “churches” (KJV) while others read “church”; in the better manuscripts the Greek is singular. At this time there were congregations scattered all over Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, but all the churches together in a given geographical area make up the church, since all the congregations are but “members” of the body of Christ.” (New Testament History Acts by Reese; pp. 370)

Evidently, multiple congregations in a given region can be together called “the church.” It is likely that this is what existed in Jerusalem during the early years of the church considering that the church usually assembled in private residences, and it is generally agreed that the expression “house to house” in Acts 8:3 refers to homes in which the churches assembled for worship. (Kretzmann pp. 570)

The Jerusalem “Mega-Church” is Illogical

This brings us to the second problem; in addition to the fact that the phrase “the church” can speak of many congregations in a city or region, it is wholly illogical to conceive of a single congregation of over 5,000 people existing in the context of Acts 1-8. If they did

meet from house to house, as the scriptures suggest, one must ask who would have a house big enough to accommodate such a crowd! Even Wayne Jackson, a cups advocate, makes this admission –

“Not long after the Jerusalem church was organized, the number of saints in that city numbered possibly 10,000 (see Acts 4:4, which calculates males only). It is highly unlikely that they had an accommodation that facilitated an assembly of perhaps 10,000 believers (not to mention children) in one room!” (Is The Bible Class Arrangement Scriptural? – Wayne Jackson)

Ironically, brother Jackson uses this passage to prove Bible Classes by arguing that the Jerusalem saints must have met in smaller assemblies, yet he and his brethren will turn around and try to prove cups by claiming that they all met in one assembly too large for single cup communion! As the saying goes, “trying to have their cake and eat it too.” While this writer is disturbed by brother Jackson’s inconsistency, he is correct in his premise that a 10,000 large assembly of Christians in the Acts 1-8 setting is an absurd picture. If they met in a house they would be unable to accommodate such a crowd; if they met in the temple it would be inconceivable to think of the Temple Authorities, who were the chief opponents of Christianity at the time (Acts 3-5), would tolerate it!

The Jerusalem “Mega Church” is Unscriptural

The final objection to the 5,000-member congregation is that it is unscriptural, in that it sets the interpretation of one passage at variance with others. Consistently the testimony of the Gospel writers describing the institution of the Lord’s Supper, which the Lord commanded us to imitate, is that only one cup was used and shared by each communicant, and the same could be said of the single loaf. In the writings of Paul the Apostle as he reiterated to the Corinthian church how they should observe the Supper he restated the singularity and common use of the “one loaf” and the cup of fruit of the vine. Any supposition that causes

us to assume that the Christians in Jerusalem, under the guidance of the Apostles, violated the instruction of Jesus Christ must be rejected as wrong and unscriptural.

In conclusion, while the single, mega-congregation concept is unnecessary, illogical and unscriptural; the idea of multiple, smaller congregations that followed the Lord’s pattern stands strong where the other falls. Consider these things with the scripture. May God’s will be done in all the churches!



IT TAKES A CHURCH. continued from page one

modern believers that they must unite with the Church! To claim to love Jesus and hate the Church is oxymoronic. To claim a relationship with Christ while maintaining disunity with the Church is one and the same as having a husband without a bride; a king without a kingdom; a head without a body; impossible!

In the churches of Christ, it is well understood how this truth impacts the plan of salvation. In order to be saved, one must come into the Church. This occurs at one’s baptism (Acts 2:38,41, 47) and is primarily a mystical action of Jesus Christ “translating” us “out of the kingdom of darkness” and into His kingdom (Col. 1:13). In this writer’s opinion, it is a less understood fact that once Christ has transferred saved people into His Church (in the universal sense) there is some assembly required on the disciple’s end! Most Bible readers understand that worship is an essential part of the Christian life and program (John 4:23-24), but not so many understand that much (if not all) worship in the Christian Institution is corporate, that is, it requires an assembly of Christians, or, to put it another way, it takes a church!

Consider, for instance, singing. The scriptures, which most portray the Christian worship in song, describe an activity of Christians “toward” and “with” “one another” (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19). In the Lord’s Supper, readers will find that the Bible describes the ordinance as the “communion,” that is, the joint participation, of the body and blood of

Jesus, and something “we all” partake of together (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Surely this is the reason that Acts 20:7 describes the disciples as not only breaking bread upon the first day of the week, but coming together “to break bread.” The collection is also described in group terms, from the command to take it up “on the first day of every week” (1 Cor. 16:1-2), to the description of it as a contribution (Rom. 15:26), from the Greek *koinonia*, the same as communion. Thus, it takes a church to perform these expressions of worship as the Bible describes them!

There is neither scriptural precedent nor example of individual Christians performing solitary worship to the Lord in the aforementioned ways, independently from the Church. It is as contrary to God’s expressed will as the idea of one being saved independently from the Church. Worship is a church action! But it is said “where two or three are gathered” Jesus is there with them. What a gross misapplication of scripture! No better than the little boy who refused his father’s instruction to shuck corn because the Bible said, “What God hath joined together let not man put asunder.” The statement about “two or three” is made in Matthew 18:20 concerning the authority of the church in administering discipline. There is nothing in that scripture about worship. Today it is said, “We are all the Church!” But this fails to consider the other senses in which the word church is used.

The visible and functional aspect of the church is just as much an organism as the universal Kingdom. In fact, the Apostle tells the local church at Corinth, “you are the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27). As the Church universal is made up of saved people called out of the world and called together into the fellowship of Christ in holiness and sanctification, so the church local is a group of Christians called out of their community and called together into a working body to worship and serve Jesus in the up-building and edification of His cause. These local churches are described well enough in the scripture. They feature a local identity (i.e. the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2); the church that meets in [Philemon’s] house (Phile. 2)); they have a recognized leadership (Acts 20:17); they have a consistent assembly (Acts 20:7); in no way can a couple of Christians occasionally meeting for coffee and spiritual discussion, or pausing on a

vacation for roadside worship be compared to, or classed as a congregation. And a third usage of the word church is in describing the assemblies of the saints (1 Cor. 14:34-35), in which the members of a local congregation are called out of their mundane lives and called together for a special time of worship and fellowship!

Modern believers are departing from the Biblical form of Christianity. Some will say, “Church is who we are, not what we do, or where we go.” But this is not correct. The Church (universal) is who we are, that is the saved people. The church local (congregation) is where we go, the communal, working, body. The church (assembly) is what we do, come together for worship and edification. It takes the Church (Universal) to have a church (local congregation); and it takes a church (local congregation) to have a church (an assembly). May God help us to take this part of his plan seriously. In Christ’s religion, it takes a Church to have a relationship with Him!



TOLERANCE AND ROMANS continued from page two

be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” Later, in verse 13 he said in the same context: “...therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”

These passages cannot be misunderstood. They are, many times, disobeyed but probably not misunderstood. Can it be possible that in Romans 14 Paul reverses his command? Of course not. Let us notice some things there. The Christian Jews, at least some of them, had not completely left the Law of Moses. They continued to observe certain days counted holy under the Law and were inclined to condemn the Gentile Christians for not doing so. The same was likely true of the Gentile Christians. They would have continued to observe certain things they had learned in the pagan world and would have been very critical and condemning of the Jewish Christians who did not observe them. This created many problems. The Jews, many of them, had a conscience against the eating of certain meats. They would not eat them. The Gentiles considered this complete absurdity and foolishness. They had never had such inhibitions.

So, the stage is set. Brother against brother! What do we know? Simply that God cared-not whether they did or didn't eat them! It was a matter of liberty. Remember this: Romans 14 does not deal with matters of law but matters of liberty. When we know from other passages that a certain thing is wrong, such as the things already noticed, those things can never be placed under Romans 14. Some things are absolute. There is no doubt. For instance, the plan of salvation: BRCB. Suppose one doesn't agree, he believes in faith only. Can we receive him under Romans 14? No, The plan of salvation is clearly revealed. God's will is known and must be obeyed- no liberty there. What about attendance at the worship service? A "weak" brother forsakes it in disobedience of Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:25. Can we overlook it in view of Romans 14? No, God's will is clearly stated. This is not a matter of liberty for us. God has spoken and we must obey.

Who is the "weak" brother in Romans 14? He is the over-strict fellow who is not willing to give up his old practices learned prior to his conversion. In other words, the "weak" brother is the one who still believed it was wrong to eat certain meats (as it had been under the Law) and insisted that everyone else be just like him. Meats were, and are, a matter of liberty in the Christian age. We can eat meat or be vegetarians. God cares not. It is a matter of liberty to us. He was considered weak because he was unwilling to give up his old inhibitions. Those who were strong were willing to give them up and cared not what the other fellow ate. All Paul is saying in Romans 14 is that the fellowship of Christians must not be broken over differences of opinion regarding things indifferent! If it doesn't matter to the Lord, God forbid that we tear the church up over it. However, where God has spoken and His will is known we must insist on it, contend for it and stand on it even at the cost of fellowship. We simply have no choice. The Bible is clear. If it is a matter of liberty, let it alone and allow each to make his own decision. If not, contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. (Jude 3) Let us be careful what we allow because of Romans 14. Think on these things.

Our Departed

NICHOLS - Dorothy Elizabeth (Bailey) Nichols was born on March 14, 1959 in Hobbs, NM. She was my sister in the flesh and my sister in Christ. Dorothy was destined to always be a part of my life. We were born in the same earthly family of course and we were both reborn into the same family (Jn 3:5). In our teenage years, our mother and father divorced one another and that would end the time we would live together as a normal brother and sister under the same roof. As our parents drifted further and further from faith in Christ, Dorothy and I tried to encourage one another to stay faithful in the church - to "build one another up in the most holy faith" (Jude 20). I know Dorothy always encouraged me to do what was right. I hope I was able to encourage her in the same way. On December 25, 1982, I performed Dorothy's marriage ceremony as she became the bride of Brad Nichols. To this union were born three children: David, Jason, and Carlene. Dorothy was the chief administrator of the home school in which she taught her children to "read, write, and do arithmetic." Dorothy took her children on countless field trips as part of their schooling. By the time each reached the age of 18, they took their GED tests, passed and went on to attend colleges and universities in Missouri. Wherever Dorothy and Brad chose to make their home, there the church would be blessed with faithful members doing what they could "holding fast the word of life" (Phil 2:16). Dorothy passed from this life on August 29, 2014 after a five year struggle with breast cancer. From my viewpoint, no husband could have done more for an ailing wife than Brad did for Dorothy in the last few months of her struggle. With heavy hearts we laid Dorothy's body to rest in a little cemetery outside of Anderson, Missouri - not far from where she would assemble every first day to break bread with her brothers and sisters in Christ (Acts 20:7). When I think of Dorothy I will think of "faithfulness." While our parents became unfaithful to the Lord and to one another, Dorothy was determined to be faithful to the Lord and to her own husband. Her example encourages me even now. I look forward to the resurrection when the "last enemy" shall finally be conquered (1 Cor 15:26), we shall all be raised from the dead and meet the Lord in the air to ever be with Him (1Th

4:13-18). I was honored to have been asked by Dorothy herself to speak at her memorial service. I am thankful for the assistance rendered by Brother Brett Hickey who preached a gospel message to those assembled. - George Battey

Field Reports

Clint De France, 5429 Flo Dr., Wichita Falls, TX 76302, September 30, 2014, cdefrance87@yahoo.com. I have failed to report to the OPA for sometime, but I am always eager to receive the paper and still benefit greatly from its material. The work in Wichita Falls continues successfully. Our evangelistic mail out generates dozens of Bible studies each year. We are thrilled to hear of other congregations using the same program with great success. Jimmy Cating, who also labors here, will speak on the mailing program at the OKC Preacher's Study this year. Since last reporting I have enjoyed more meetings than I could discuss, but I am inexpressibly thankful for the hospitality, support, and encouragement that I receive from my brethren. Most recently I was with the congregations in Bandy, Kentucky and Glendale, Arizona. Both meetings were well attended and time spent with those Christians was a blessing. I will speak in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Sunday, October 5). My remaining meetings are at Seminole, Oklahoma (October 22-26); and Fort Smith, Arkansas (October 29 - November 2). Please take note of my new address. We appreciate your prayers.

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, e-mail old_paths@juno.com Oct 14, 2014- Since last report the church at home has done very well. Crowds are improving with some outside interest from time to time. The contractors have made great progress on the new building and we look forward to soon being able to move in. The work in the Philippines seems to be doing well and we have our plans made to make the annual trip this coming January. Lord willing, Frank Brancato will travel with me and I'm happy to have him once again. We are scheduled to begin a gospel meeting at Columbia, MO Oct. 22 (Wednesday-Sunday) and since I have never been there I am especially looking forward to being with them. I am having computer problems right now and will likely have to mail the copy at least a day late. Thank you all

for your patience. A note to our preachers: please send your reports and articles to the paper as early as possible as this allows me more time to put the copy together and get it to the printers on time. If you send something for publication and it doesn't immediately appear, keep in mind that we publish a month in advance so it may be in the next issue. Also, please send your subscription renewals, etc. as early as possible as well. Our thanks to all, and we ask your prayers in the work.

Eric J. Stone, 94-371 Ikepono Street, Waipahu, HI 96797, ericstone101@yahoo.com Sept. 16 -Aloha to our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. We have had a very busy summer here in Hawaii. My family has taken turns making trips to the mainland, we had two gospel meetings here, and we also had three new families move to Hawaii! My wife and my oldest son went to visit our dear friends, Bro Steve and Sis Ronda Cozby, and were able to attend the Memorial Day meeting in Turlock, CA, where my son Cody gave a lesson. Following that meeting in June, Bro Nathan Battey and his wife Savannah came for a visit, and he held a wonderful meeting. The preaching was superb, and I really appreciated all the work and study he did with us between services. His home school experience and knowledge of books has really helped us to make our plans for school this year. At the end of June, my second son and I had the opportunity to travel and visit brethren from Bakersfield, Stockton, and Oakdale, CA all before going on to Springfield, MO for the 4th of July meeting. It was fantastic! I was thankful for the opportunity to preach in every place we visited, including Lebanon, MO. In August, Bro Clint DeFrance and his wife Leanne came, visited, and he held a meeting. Again, the preaching was wonderful, and we had a really fun time sampling all the different culture's cuisines while they were here. Ask Clint about balut! We had a handful of brethren come over for Bro Clint's meeting (Bro Melvin and Sis Lynette Lee, and Bro Steve and Sis Ronda Cozby, from Manteca, CA). We really can't describe how much we appreciate their continued support and their help while they were here. Bro Clint was very helpful and even held a singing school for us. We had a new family move here from the Philippines, and a couple of family members of one of our sisters recently moved here from the Philippines as well. Bro Frank and Sis Sandy Bedford moved their family to Oahu from

Stockton, CA, and it has been a real blessing to have them here! My daughter is especially excited about their two little girls! Our kids have all started their home school, and are settling into a groove. Our boys are growing up so quickly! We just love to see how their love for the scriptures keeps growing as well. Our small congregation has had some very difficult trials recently, but they have proven to be opportunities for further study, which I believe will lead us to spiritual growth and closeness between brethren. We are blessed to live on a beautiful Island, but much more than that, we are truly blessed by God to have one another. We also love having visitors, so visit any time! The congregation of the Lord's Church in Hawaii salutes you all!

Darrell Crawford 208 E Baldwin Rd. Unit S Panama City, Fl. 32405 bugz1955@hotmail.com I would like to thank everyone for their concern calls, cards and prayers while I was sick a month ago. Thanks to the Lord, I am doing much better. I am fully recovered and doing what I love to do. Everything is going well here in Panama City. Thanks to several congregations, we have almost completely remodeled the building inside and out. We again want to thank all who helped with this great endeavor. We are very blessed here with love and unity among the brethren here, God has truly blessed us. We recently had a brother move to our area from south Alabama; we pray he will be an asset to the work here. We are growing spiritually as well as numerically, we thank God for all the blessings here. The brethren here are willing to step up and do whatever is necessary to further the work. The women are eager to do whatever they can in a scriptural manner. We are having visitors to the area as well as from the community. One man came about 4 weeks, he hasn't been back in a couple of weeks, another came last Lord's day and stayed after and visited a while. Our October Friday Fest went very well. We had about 15 sign up for the correspondence course and took the first issue. Several inquired about the location and service times at the church. Many still think the congregation had disbanded long ago. We plan on doing another booth in November right before our meeting with Bobby Cunningham, Nov 6-9. We believe these will be very good for the work here. Please continue to pray for the work here, that the Lord will continue to bless. If you are in our area, please come by and visit. May we all keep to

the old paths and may the Lord bless His church everywhere.

Steven Bowen, 105 N. Lenard, Red Oak, Texas 75154: Certainly the Lord has showered us with blessings this fall! I suppose we could say it was the fall of assists: In September, Doug Hawkins came through Lexington, Oklahoma and preached a beautiful and moving gospel for five days, greatly uplifting the congregation there. He is skilled in laying out a case, driving home its undeniable truths, then compelling the audience to respond. It is a sound template for gospel preaching, and its design is the Lord's glory. In Little Rock, Brett Hickey made a September tour for several days to preach and help with TV leads there, and the result was a baptism and many more leads and positive blessings. In Deer Park, Texas, our good friend Chuck Sears continues to spearhead leads in that area and walk us, literally, right up to front doors. About all we have to do is walk into homes, open God's Word, and tell its grand story. While in Deer Park recently, Chuck and I were able to study the second time with a friend of his who once coached with some of my old coaching friends in Houston. Our friend Sam has a great desire and "hunger and thirsting" for truth (Matthew 5:6) and has tearfully expressed his desire to learn more of this inspired book. About halfway through our latest gospel study that began with the parable of the sower then moved on to the nobleman of Acts 8 and beyond, he asked me an interesting question as we outlined the study on a marking board lying on the coffee table: "Steve," he said, "who influenced you to share the gospel this way?" Chuck smiled at that question, because he knew our heart weighed heavy that night because a few hours before my uncle, Alton Bailey, had laid down his sword. We smiled, too - so honored by the question - and explained that we were blessed above most both to be taught by and watch the examples of two of the great preachers of the past century: my grandfather E.H. Miller and my Uncle Alton. We seldom if ever walk into a home to visit or study without thinking of the example of these two men who showed us how to do it many, many years ago. I explained about the great Bible knowledge of these two men and their ability to weave the Old Testament with the new in such a smooth transition that you could not even see a seam. I am so blessed that my Uncle Alton did more for me than preach. He filled a gap

that we Bowen boys needed at an impressionable time, and he did so in such a way that only a great man could do, nourishing us spiritually as his own (Ephesians 6:4). But there's something else I want all my brethren and sisters to know about Alton Bailey: He was a rare balcony man. He knew how to speak highly of a man unlike any I've met. He spoke highly of my best friend and his right-hand man, Mike Thompson of the Murphy Avenue Church of Christ in LaGrange. Each time I visited him back home through the years; he praised my sweet wife Marilyn in every conversation, reminding me how blessed I was that she broke down and married me almost four decades ago; and he offered me something that I will take all the way to my last sermon: he encouraged me more than any other to preach the gospel. He gave us the confidence and tools we would need to step out into the field, take the seed of the kingdom in hand, and sow it to the right hand and the left with courage and joy, both in season and out. But today - at this writing - we went as far as we could with one of my great heroes, and we said goodbye in Grapevine, Texas, miles away from his red clay roots. I want to tell you what you already know: Uncle Alton was a great man. He was a Southern gentleman, a gentleman's gentleman; and we will make it a lifelong goal to carry ourselves with his grace and to weave the gospel with his rare efficiency. Thanks for your prayers on behalf of Aunt Florence, my mama's baby sister, and all the family. Please pray that Uncle Alton's works will long follow him. God bless! -steven.bowen@redoakisd.org

Bennie T. Cryer, 4635 Larkin Rd., Live Oak, CA 95953. In September I had the privilege of speaking at the Springer Rd. Congregation in Lawrenceburg Tennessee as well as the Chapel Grove congregation. It was good to be with these congregations once more as well as being with Duane and Laurie Permenter once again. On the way there we enjoyed a short visit with Joe and Joann Norton and spoke twice at the Green Oaks church in Arlington, TX. The Olivehurst congregation is doing well and the Lord continues to bless it and its work. Bro. Jerry Little, though he is among our older members and depends on a motorized scooter to get around, has written a short tract advertising the church and some of the things we believe the Bible teaches. He has passed

this tract out to hundreds of homes in Olivehurst and Yuba City. As a result the Lord has blessed his efforts with six baptisms and found another member of the church that was not attending and who is now attending our services on a regular basis. In addition the church in Yuba City has baptized six more of their young people. So they are being blessed by the Lord. Health wise I am doing much better for which I thank the Lord and our brothers and sisters in Christ who continue to pray for me.

What If God. . .

WHAT if God Wouldn't take the time to bless us today because we didn't take the time to thank Him yesterday?

What if God decided to stop leading us tomorrow because we didn't follow Him today?

What if we never saw another flower bloom because we grumbled when God sent the rain?

What if God took away the Bible tomorrow because we would not read it today?

What if God took away His message because we failed to listen to His messenger?

What if God hadn't sent His only begotten Son because He wanted us to pay the price for sin?

What if the door of the church was closed because we didn't open the door to our hearts?

What if God stopped loving and caring for us because we failed to live and care for others?

What if God would not hear us today because we would not listen to Him?

What if God answered our prayers the way we answer His call to service?

What if God met our needs the way we give Him of our lives?

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THE BACK PAGE...

IT TAKES ONLY ONE GENERATION

By CARL M. JOHNSON

Thomas Charles Chilton Moore is often referred to as the “Father of American Atheism.” Moore was born December 20, 1837, near Lexington, Kentucky. He grew up in a Bible believing home, but as an adult he began to doubt the Bible and its teachings and passed through stages of deism and agnosticism before becoming a devout, militant atheist.

In 1884, he began publishing a journal devoted to the promotion of atheism called, “The Blue Grass Blade.” In 1899, he began a discussion in the pages of the journal with a local judge about “free love.” Moore used lewd and obscene language in those discussions and was indicted in February of 1899 for mailing obscene literature through the mail—a federal crime.

Moore decided to defend himself in court. The jury heard evidence that he had not only printed many lewd and obscene articles in his journal, but that he had also printed many articles attacking the belief in the existence of God. The jury deliberated only five minutes before returning with a verdict of “guilty.”

While he was indicted on the charge of mailing obscene literature, he was actually convicted of blasphemy. The judge sentenced Moore to two years in the Ohio State Penitentiary. He was one of the last men in America to be sent to prison for the crime of blasphemy. President William McKinley ended up commuting Moore’s sentence to six months, with one month off for good behavior. Moore was released in July 1899. While in prison, however, he wrote his autobiography entitled, “Behind the Bars.”

Moore died at his homestead, Quaker Acre, just outside Lexington, on February 7, 1906 after a long illness. Rumors circulated in some newspapers that he made a deathbed conversion, but his wife said he died as he lived.

Moore was reintroduced to American atheists when Madalyn Murray O’Hare’s American Atheist’s Press reprinted his first book, “The Rational View,” in 1984, and his autobiography, “Behind the Bars,” in 1990.

Perhaps the most shocking fact about Moore is that he was the grandson of Barton W. Stone, one of the greatest preachers in the history of the American Churches of Christ, and a leader with Alexander Campbell of the great American Restoration Movement of the 1800’s. Stone baptized thousands of people and trained numerous preachers of the Gospel.

Moore’s story shows that people have the right to choose whether or not they will obey God. Even though he was a member of the Stone family, who gave themselves wholeheartedly to the cause of Christ, not everyone in the family chose to go the same direction.

His story also reinforces the concern that the church is only one generation away from apostasy. Another classic example of this truth is found in a narrative in Judges 2:6-14. Joshua led the Children of Israel to its successful conquest of Canaan. After the land was successfully divided among the tribes and sub-tribes of Israel, Joshua died at the age of 110. His teaching and influence among the tribes of Israel were so powerful that no one from his generation or the second generation apostatized from God.

However, the second generation made some mistakes that led to the apostasy of the third and succeeding generations. The second generation did not teach its children the Word of God with the same clarity and zeal with which it had been taught. The consequences were that the third and succeeding generations in Canaan slipped easily and quickly into the idolatrous practices of their pagan neighbors.

Fundamental matters that are familiar to us are by no means familiar to those who have never heard them before. Therefore, it is imperative that every generation be taught the truth all over again, or departure and apostasy are inevitable results.

Several years ago a preacher said, “The next ten years are going to be especially critical for the churches of Christ.” I agreed with the statement, but I also believe that every ten-year period is critical to the church. It is during that period that each generation receives and formulates the views that will influence and direct its course.

If our children and grandchildren do not understand clearly from the Scriptures what we believe and why we believe it, they will have no sense of loyalty to it. Subsequently, when they mature and assume responsibility for the church, they will not hesitate to abandon the “Old Paths.” As easy victims of the subtle forces of apostasy, they can be led like Israel to incorporate into the Lord’s church the sinful practices of their neighbors.

The narrative in Judges 2:6-14 offers us a clarion warning today that any generation that does not respect and cherish its heritage will eventually lose it. It also teaches that if we fail to learn from the mistakes of history, we are destined to repeat them (Cf. Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 11:22). May God help us to learn our lesson well so that we do not neglect even one generation. cmjthebackpage@gmail.com