

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. 10

CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?

BY BILLY D. DICKINSON

The Bible claims to be a revelation from God to man. Do you believe that to be true? If you answer in the affirmative, this is a good place to begin because it leads to the inescapable conclusion that man can understand the Bible. After all, that is the very meaning and purpose of revelation! Paul wrote in Eph. 3:3, “How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery.” This literally refers to a laying bare or making naked, involving a disclosure of truth concerning divine things before unknown (Thayer, p. 62). Incidentally, when Paul used the word “mystery,” it has to do with something outside the knowledge of man which can only be ascertained by divine revelation. Those things which were once hidden in the mind of God, Paul affirms that “by revelation he made known unto me.”

But then Paul refers to his writings: “As I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4). Notice that Paul is describing a process where he received his knowledge by direct revelation, he then shared with his readers what was revealed unto him, and that enabled them to possess the same understanding that Paul had of God’s great redemptive scheme. This leads to the inescapable conclusion that the Bible is an understandable book or it really isn’t a revelation at all! As Psalms 119:130 declares, “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”

There are people, of course, who would argue otherwise, especially with the idea that we can understand the Scriptures alike. However, if we can understand the Bible at all, it can be understood alike because it is impossible for two people to understand something correctly while their positions are self-contradictory and as different

as day and night. In an attempt to smooth things over, the statement is often made in a nonchalant way, “We just understand it differently.” No, the real problem has to do with a misunderstanding on someone’s part, leading to differences among religious folks, as well as an unfortunate disregard for the truth on certain subjects. Peter described how some “wrest” the Scriptures, meaning to twist or distort, and that the unlearned and unstable of his day did so “unto their own destruction” (2 Pet 3:16). Can we understand the Bible? Let’s notice some of the various answers given to this question in the religious world. This is important for two reasons: (1) It shows how some people try to justify religious division, and (2) it exposes their reasoning for what it is. As we’re going to see, these various answers run the gamut from one end of the spectrum to the other...

CATHOLICISM

Some are very bold in declaring that the Bible is not an understandable book, causing them to argue that the Scriptures cannot be understood without an official interpreter. Years ago a book was written by James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers* and it’s still in print and can be read on the Internet. M. Gibbons (who served as Bishop of Richmond from 1872 to 1877 and Archbishop of Baltimore from 1877 to the time of his death in 1921) says in his book: “The Catholic Church correctly teaches that our Lord and His Apostles inculcated certain important duties of religion which are not recorded by the inspired writer. For instance, most Christians pray to the Holy Ghost, a practice which is nowhere found in the Bible. We must therefore conclude that the Scriptures alone cannot be a sufficient guide and rule of faith because they cannot at anytime be within the reach of every inquirer, because they are not of themselves clear and intelligible even in matters of the highest importance, and because they do not contain all the truths necessary for salvation.”

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Editorial

PERILS OF OUR SOULS

By: DON L. KING

In Mark chapter 4 verses 35-41, we read that Jesus and His disciples decided to cross the Sea of Galilee and enter the country of the Gadarenes, about a two hour trip under usual conditions. It had been a busy time for the Lord and the disciples, and they were perhaps seeking a little rest when they made the voyage. When at sea, mariners must always take care to avoid the many perils along the shore. Just as they had to be careful, so must we as we sail our frail barque along life's way. Let us notice a few things of importance.

For some time now it has been a concern of brethren that there are so many doctrines of men which may cause us to falter and perhaps be lost. So many are clueless as to what the Bible really teaches. People often know more about their favorite ball teams than the Scriptures. It is amazing the Devil doesn't beguile more than he does.

In our present world, false doctrine is on every hand. Unfortunately, sometimes we need look no further than among our own people. We are reasonably sure it isn't their intention to be a false teacher but sometimes they are. Jesus plainly warned against the doctrines (teachings) of men. In Matthew 15:9 He said, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." If we allow false doctrine to make its way into our conversations and worship, it is seen by God as empty, without value, or vain. What is really alarming is when false doctrine is taught and NO ONE recognizes it! This has actually happened; and before anyone became aware, major damage had already taken place. Brethren had become so accustomed to hearing it, that after a time they apparently thought it was genuine. Jesus warned against following teachers who are blind spiritually. In Matthew 15:14 He said, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Notice please: Just because we may be ignorant of the truth, does not protect us from falling into the same ditch (error) as the teacher! On the contrary, it is the very cause of our falling in. If I am spiritually blind, the very last person I want leading me is someone who is also spiritually blind. In 1 Timothy 4:2, Paul warned against heeding those who are: "Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared

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QUERIST COLUMN

By Ronny F. Wade

Question: In view of Luke 16:16, where does Matthew 19:9 belong?

Answer: The verse in question reads “The law and the prophets were until John, since then the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.” The basic idea of this verse merely indicates that with the last book of the Old Testament scriptures, (Malachi), no further revelation came from God until John broke the silence by his preaching in the wilderness. From that point the kingdom of heaven was preached. Obviously Matthew 19:9 came after John began his preaching, hence in order to determine where the verse applies, one must first of all determine if the verse agrees with or differs from what the Law of Moses taught. The passage in Matthew reads “And I say unto you, whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” (NKJV) The context of this verse is couched in the question asked of Jesus by the Pharisees, “is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” Jesus replied by directing them to the beginning stating “they are no longer two but one flesh, therefore what God hath joined together let not man separate.” They then asked “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce and put her away? He answered “Moses, because of the hardness of your heart permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” Those who claim that Moses (Deut. 24:1-4) authorized the practice of divorce miss the point. There is no law in the Old Testament that institutes the practice of divorce. Divorce was an age old and accepted practice, long before Deut. 24 was written. The Deut. passage merely discusses whether or not the divorced woman can return to her first husband if her second husband dies or if he divorces her. In other words the legislation of Moses limits divorce, rather than serves as a provision for it. Matthew 19:9 on the other hand actually provides for divorce based on the unfaithfulness of one of the partners “And I say unto you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another

commits adultery, and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” This clearly shows that the passage was not a part of the Law of Moses, but Kingdom teaching by Christ himself. Does Matthew 19:9 apply today? Of course it does. Those who make the argument that unless something in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is repeated after Pentecost it does not apply to Christians today, miss the point and actually enunciate an unscriptural hermeneutic. H. C. Thomas wrote “What he (Jesus) said in the flesh is no part of the new law, unless set forth by the apostles...” “Anything the apostles did not give by precept or example cannot be the law of the church....Mt. Mark, Luke and John (that is what they wrote) is no part of the New Testament; it is a history of the life of Christ, not a word or line was give for the law to the church till the day of Pentecost, for there was no church until that day.” It is amazing to what lengths one will go in order to exclude Matthew 19:9 from being applicable today. Think about this, if Brother Thomas is correct Matthew 18:15-17; Matt. 5:28; Matt. 23:9; Matt. 7:12 and Luke 7:12 do not apply today, because none of them are repeated by an apostle after Pentecost. It should be noted that even though Jesus spoke Mt. 19:9 prior to Pentecost. Matthew actually wrote it many years subsequent to Pentecost. It is a very strange handling of the scriptures to suggest that Jesus could not legislate for the coming Kingdom before it was actually established, unless someone repeated what he said in Acts or one of the epistles. The teaching of Christ in this passage, limits divorce to one reason “fornication or sexual immorality.” Divorce sought and secured for any other reason is wrong and in violation of this passage. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

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“AS MANY CUPS AS CONGREGATIONS”

By Andrew Richardson

The assembled children of God drinking fruit of the vine from one cup was clearly commanded and exemplified by Jesus in the institution of communion (Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:23; 1 Cor. 11:25). After taking a cup of fruit of the vine and giving it to the disciples, He commanded, “Drink of it, all of you...” (ESV, Matt. 26:27) He also said, “This cup is the new Testament in my blood...” (1 Cor. 11:25). Thus we have His command and His pattern. Drinking from individual cups is not the communion -it is a different observance, just as much as sprinkling is not baptism. One of the most illogical arguments in favor of individual cups is the notion that because there are many cups worldwide by means of many congregations, many cups in one assembly must therefore be permitted. The late Guy N. Woods amazingly offered this clearly flawed line of thinking in his book, *Questions and Answers - Open Forum*:

“How are all the churches of Christ, through the world, to use but ‘one cup’ (container) in the observance of the Lord’s Supper? Such is obviously impossible. The difficulty is not removed by conceding to each congregation one container; in this case, there is not one cup but many -as many cups as congregationsto contend for ‘one cup’ and then to justify as many cups as there are congregations is to abandon the argument as well as to be guilty of gross inconsistency” (V.1, p. 209, 1976).

Kevin Pendergrass, another advocate of multi-cup communion, echoed the same reasoning in the Pendergrass-Elmore Debate on June 5th, 2009, saying:

“To argue that each congregation is to have its own ‘cup of the Lord’ is to argue for more than one cup of the Lord - as many cups as congregations. To contend for only one container and then justify as many containers as there are congregations is to abandon the argument for having only one container to begin with” (1st Speech, 19:47).

One more example would be that of James Oldfield, host of the North Carolina television program, *A Word from the Lord*, who said:

“If the cup of the Lord can be represented by one individual cup in each congregation, and thus you have multiple cups representing this cup, why can’t you have multiple cups in the congregation?” (Communion: How Many Cups? 32:00)

This is really quite simple. Whatever is commanded or forbidden in the communion by the commands and pattern of Jesus can only be bound on each congregation individually, since it is only ever observed by individual, autonomous congregations! Let me repeat that: the Lord’s supper is only ever observed by individual, congregations, so it should be understood that whatever is commanded by Christ can only apply to such. Comprehend?

I’ll say it like this: the communion is observed on a congregational level. A Christian does not keep it privately, alone, by his or her self, nor does the universal church come together in one super congregation (such is not even possible). The first century church was instructed and led by the inspired apostles (Luke 11:49; Acts 2:37,42; 4:35; 8:18; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:29; 2 Pet. 3:2; Jude 1:17), and under their divine guidance the Lord’s supper was observed by a gathered assembly (the apostles themselves were gathered together when Christ taught it to them). Therefore, the proper manner in which it is kept-in harmony with Jesus’ example - applies to the assembly gathered to observe it. So I’ll say it again (and plenty more times before we’re finished)-that which is required in the observance of communion (all drinking from the same cup) applies to the assembly observing it, because, in the Lord’s church, that is the only situation in which it is ever observed!

That each congregation is autonomous (independent) from another is a fact of which Woods was well aware. The other two gentlemen are aware of it just as much. Every congregation’s observance is independent from another congregation’s observance, and each one of those observances must conform to the Lord’s instructions and pattern. Let’s explore this fact

THE PASSOVER LAMB

The Israelites were commanded to have one lamb per house (Ex. 12:3), yet there were many houses throughout the nation. Is it reasonable to believe that to argue for one lamb per house is to argue for more than one lamb because there are as many lambs as houses? Nope. Not by a long shot. This requirement for celebrating the Passover (the use of

one lamb) pertained to the households individually (“a lamb for a house”), not the nation as a whole. It was observed on a household level-not a national one. According to the reasoning of Woods, Pendergrass, and Oldfield, each house could surely have had multiple lambs during the Passover because there were multiple lambs nationwide, but we see how such logic is flawed. Since the command “a lamb for a house” existed, each house would still be required to use just one, regardless of whatever the situation was nationwide. Make sure to make a mental note of that and go back and read their quotes again! Since Christ’s pattern (all drinking from the same cup of fruit of the vine) and command exist, then each individual congregation is required to obey, no matter what results from it on a worldwide scale.

Consider also that when there are simultaneous assemblies worldwide, consequentially, there are simultaneous speakers worldwide, but simultaneous speaking in one assembly is forbidden (1 Cor. 14:29-33). Also, while there are simultaneous assemblies, there may be multiple songs offered to the Lord. One assembly might be singing “I Must Tell Jesus,” while another congregation is singing “Wonderful Words of Life” at the same time, but would it be acceptable to sing multiple songs at the same time in one assembly? Would it? The point is, just because something occurs on a worldwide scale by means of multiple assemblies (e.g., multiple cups, simultaneous speakers, different songs sung simultaneously, etc.) does not mean that such is permitted to occur in a single assembly.

Now I would like to address all three of their comments one by one:

Guy Woods said: “How are all the churches of Christ, through the world, to use but “one cup” (container) in the observance of the Lord’s Supper?”

Did Guy Woods really believe anyone was saying this? Did he really think this was the issue -that the whole church the world over had to use one physical cup? There are only two options: either he did believe this was what people were contending for, or he was using sophistry. If this is what he believed, then what is it worth to anyone to consider any thing the scholar has to say on the issue since his whole understanding of it is rooted in obvious error? Whatever may be the case with him, let’s make sure we understand that the church of Christ as a whole does not have to use one cup, and nobody is saying they do. Multiple cups of fruit of the

vine by means of multiple congregations are fine, reasonable, permissible, acceptable, scriptural, authorized, right, expected, and justifiable. Multiple cups in a single observance are not.

“The difficulty is not removed by conceding to each congregation one container; in this case, there is not one cup but many-as many cups as congregations.”

The difficulty of which he speaks is the concept he stated before about the church as a whole using one cup, but this difficulty does not need to be removed, nor is it really a difficulty - it is not the issue. Many cups of fruit of the vine worldwide are permissible. Individual Christians in one assembly each drinking from their own cup is sinful. The use of individual cups is disobedient to the command of Christ and a change of His pattern. Whose pattern should we follow? Man’s or Christ’s?

Kevin Pendergrass said:

“To contend for only one container and then justify as many containers as there are congregations is to abandon the argument for having only one container to begin with.”

I used the Passover example earlier to refute this. Pendergrass might as well be saying, “To contend for only one lamb and then justify as many lambs as there are houses is to abandon the argument for having only one lamb to being with.”

The whole argument here is nothing but an assertion. There is no explanation as to why the contention of the one is abandoned by the other. All they have ever established with this argument is that there cannot be one container worldwide, which nobody ever denied in the first place! This assertion requires the premise that all observances of the Lord’s supper on the first day of the week constitute as one single observance that there is no such thing as multiple observances or individual observances. I say it again: for the argument to even be considered, it must be assumed that all observances of communion somehow merge as one single observance. Kevin Pendergrass should affirm or deny that each congregation’s observance is independent from another’s. If he affirms, at the very moment his argument falls.

Along the same line, James Oldfield said: “If the cup of the Lord can be represented by one individual cup in each congregation, and thus you have multiple cups representing this cup, why can’t

you have multiple cups in the congregation?"

Because multiple cups in the congregation are prohibited by, and contrary to, the divine pattern and command of Jesus. Enough said.

To all those who keep the Lord's supper in an unrighteous manner, including these three gentlemen, I plead with you to repent. Let us remember the Lord in the way He intended. Consider it. Pray on it. May the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts.

WHY SUNDAY SCHOOL AND BIBLE CLASSES ARE UNSCRIPTURAL?

BY GREGORY S. ROBBINS

Sunday School and Bible Classes are unscriptural because it violates the pattern set forth in the scriptures that we are to be taught in one general assembly. Paul in writing to the Church in Ephesus addressed one undivided assembly in Chapter 6 of that letter. From a good reading of that Chapter we notice that he addressed single people, married people, older people and young people in one undivided assembly. Therefore we see how Sunday School/Bible classes deviates from the ancient landmark. Because it divides the assembly, Paul wrote in 1Cor. 1:10 "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." It should be noted that Sunday School or Bible classes also allow women to teach publicly. When we allow the scriptures to speak, we learn "that a woman is to keep silent in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law"(1Cor. 14:34) For these reasons Sunday School and Bible classes are unscriptural. In Searching for the Ancient order, we must notice that Sunday school and Bible classes never originated in the mind of God. In fact it was Robert Raikes in the 1790's who made an effort to teach homeless children reading and the church catechism. However, the Sunday

school system is just another tradition of man. It is a way to apostatize the Lord's Church. Paul warned "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."(1Tim. 4:1) Don't be fooled by the digressives and their evil tendencies to mix the Home and the Church. Notice that women have been given the home to be the natural caretaker. Paul writing to Titus stated that "the aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children." (Titus.2:3-4) Furthermore, the Church is no place for Sunday school, Bible classes vacation bible school, Jam fests, youth groups & camps.

This is an effort to mix the Home which is private study with the worship of the Church which is public worship. These types of unscriptural forms of education allow a woman to teach publicly Paul gave his voice against such an innovation in (1Cor. 14:34) "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." The worship service is the only true religious service that the Bible authorizes. Consider (Acts 20:7) "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." When men want the Sunday school system they want to be like the sects around them. This causes the church to digress from the ancient landmark just like "The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." (2Pt. 2:22) Thus the Church of Christ ceases from following the pattern set forth in the scriptures (Act 2:42) "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." May we never be ashamed of the gospel of Christ (Rom 1:16) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

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I would like to make a couple of observations about the above quotation. First, when people pray to the Holy Spirit, it is freely admitted that the practice is “nowhere found in the Bible.” In other words, its not a Biblical practice, but its authority is only “of men” (Matt. 21:25). What an admission! Instead of casting doubt upon the sufficiency of God’s word, it simply shows that some have departed from the faith (1 Tim. 4:1). also, what are we to make of the assertion that the Scriptures are not “clear and intelligible?” Obviously this is not the correct answer because it denies what the Bible claims for itself: It can be understood (Eph. 3:3-4; 1 John 5:13) and we are “not to go beyond the things which are written” (1 Cor. 4:6- ASV).

Mr. Gibbons’ book is said to be “a plain exposition and vindication of the principal tenets of the Catholic Church,” meaning that you can read and understand its contents, but supposedly God didn’t have the ability to give us a book with clear and intelligible language. Think about the implications of that! Although Mr. Gibbons’ book contains more than 100,000 words in 15 chapters, they do not question its readability because it is a “plain exposition.” Yet, according to this view, I guess we need a special interpreter to understand the Second Epistle of John, even though it consists of only 13 verses. Who can believe it?

DIRECT OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT

In order to understand the Scriptures, some claim that you must allow the Holy Spirit to open up your mind and guide you in a direct, esoteric way. However, this position involves circular reasoning. After all, the Holy Spirit would not lead someone to contradict His inspired word (Eph. 6:17) or to deny a commandment that has been given. When Paul wrote that “it is a shame for women to speak in the church” (1Cor. 14:35), he then gave this warning: “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (verse 37). In other words, the only way one can know that something is of God is if it can be backed up by a “thus saith the Lord.” That takes you right back to the Scriptures for our source of authority.

We have situations in the denominational world where different groups claim to be led by the

Spirit in a direct, miraculous way, but they don’t even agree on major points of doctrine (like the Godhead). As Paul wrote in 1Cor. 14:33, “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.” This is not the correct answer.

POSTMODERNISM

We live in a world where the effects of postmodernism are evident all around us. It is the view that there is no absolute truth and you don’t have the right to tell anyone that they are in error. When you stop to think about it, denominationalism is a reflection of that kind of thinking. “Join the church of your choice”, “One church is as good as another” “That’s just your private interpretation”- We’ve all been confronted with those kinds of quips, implying that doctrine is unimportant and everyone has a right to their own private interpretation of the Scriptures.

Make no mistake about it, postmodernism has found its way into the Lord’s church. One brother, for example, is on record saying that baptism is necessary to salvation ... if you understand it to be. That’s postmodernism in a nutshell! Its the assertion that each individual is entitled to his own version of the truth, making the individual the standard instead of God’s word. Can we understand the Bible? Yes, but if we approach it with the attitude that any interpretation is acceptable, we are not going to be a good student of the Scriptures.

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PERILS OF OUR SOULScontinued from page two

with a hot iron.” Who is this person? It is someone, anyone, who teaches a doctrine they really know is false. They know they are leading you astray and do not care. They have no conscience against leading you the wrong way. Perhaps they do it for money, because of stubbornness, or even rebellion coupled with a vicious attitude toward others who have tried to lead you to the truth. The end result, however, is that their victims may well be lost eternally and they could care less. Do you know anyone fitting this description? If so, get away fast and stay away. The Scriptures promise horrible things to those who teach “... any other gospel.” (Galatians 1: 8, 9)

There is much ignorance of the Word of God today. We do ourselves great harm by allowing our knowledge of the Bible to remain low. Peter said the Lord was crucified because of ignorance. (Acts 3:17) In Hosea 4:6 the Prophet said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” A

lack of knowledge renders us unequal to the task of combating or silencing a false teacher. We may not even realize false doctrine when we hear it; and if we do, we are perhaps unable to defend the truth. Jesus said "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32) If we desire to be free of sin, and this is exactly what Jesus is speaking of, we must have knowledge of the truth so we may remain on the right track. Jesus once said, "...Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." (Matthew 22:29) Lately, we have seen good folks completely led astray and thinking all the while they were in the right. This is frustrating and so very sad.

We recall the story, (I hope it was only a story!) of a father who visited his son's school room in the long ago when Bible things were sometimes taught in the local schools. The teacher asked the class who tore down the walls of Jericho? No one answered. There was a long and embarrassing pause and finally the father said, "Son, if you done it, admit it! True story? We have no idea; but the point is well taken, isn't it?"

Usually a person may be uninformed in the Scriptures simply because he doesn't study. However, some are uninformed because they have no desire to know more. Apathy is one of the great problems among God's people today. This has happened even in Bible times and may well be the reason Hosea said the Lord's people were "...destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6) There was a time when Church members were together they discussed the Bible. Other things might also come up, but the Scriptures were always spoken of and part of the visit. Many of us can recall when members of the church of Christ were known for their Bible knowledge and said to be "walking Bibles." Sadly, that is no longer the case in many places. Apathy brings about not only a lack of Bible knowledge but also encourages worldliness as well. On the other hand, worldliness usually brings about apathy also. Apathy is simply the state of someone who just doesn't care enough to learn more about spiritual matters.

Bible knowledge among the Lord's people is on the increase in some places, and we thank God for that. Brethren, let's encourage one another to read and study more frequently. Knowledge is one of the greatest tools we have against the Devil. He obviously prefers to work on those who know very little and are not particularly interested in knowing more. It isn't too late to turn things around everywhere. May God bless us to desire a greater knowledge of His Word. Think on these things. DLK

Announcements

ROY LEE CRISWELL CHANGE OF ADDRESS, ETC.

Brother Roy Lee Criswell writes that he has moved. His new address is: 10306 Lucca Lane, Peculiar, MO 64078. His new phone number is: 417-342-1336 (cell) Please note these changes. DLK

On October 27, 2013, the East Brundage Lane Church of Christ and the Planz Road Church of Christ of Bakersfield will become one. The East Brundage Land church is selling their property and will be meeting in the Planz Road church building, 2215 Planz Road, Bakersfield, CA. Sunday worship is at 10:30am and 5:00p.m. Wednesday services are at 7:30 p.m. Frank Brancato continues his work with the church in Bakersfield. The brethren listed in the church directory for Bakersfield may be contacted, if necessary. Frank Brancato, Darrel Brewer, Terry Osburn, and Doyle Elliott.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP

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Our Departed

BROWN - Eugene Brown was born Sept. 15, 1930 to James and Della Brown near Competition, MO. He departed this life Sunday, July 14, 2013 in his home near Long Lane, MO. at the age of 82 years, 9 months and 29 days. Gene was married to Loveta Richardson on Dec. 22, 1955. Gene was a good farmer, some have said he was as good a farmer as they had ever known. He and Loveta raised their family on the farm and taught them the same. Gene was baptized by Wayne Fussell during a meeting at the Claxton Church of Christ in 1959 or 1960. Gene and Loveta have attended services at Niangua for the last several years. Gene, Loveta, and their family have been a blessing to the church at Lees Summit and Niangua for many years and he is and will be missed. Gene is survived by his wife, Loveta, one daughter, Marsha and her husband, Dale Keenan of Marshfield; and two sons,

Michael Brown and his wife, Mary, and Kent Brown and his wife Joann from Long Lane. Also surviving are 5 grandchildren, Matthew and his wife, Sunila, Nathan, Kelby, Miranda, Camron and his wife, Alex, Ryan, Lindsay and Haley; one sister, Beulah McGinnis and a host of relatives and friends. Gene was laid to rest at New Hope Cemetery, at Long Lane, MO. Ronny Wade and I offered words of comfort. -Ron Alexander

LINDSAY - Dotty Jean Lindsay, the daughter of James Argus and Ruth Pearl White Emmerson, was born September 7, 1928 near Hartville, MO. and departed this life August 10, 2013 at Lebanon, MO. Dotty is survived by three daughters, Vickie Bogan and her husband, Ron of Springfield, MO, Linda Gunter, of Mountain Home, AR, and Judy Eisenhauer, and her husband, Todd of Wentzville, MO and five grandchildren, Amy, Adam, Andrea, Page and Jacob, and two great-grandchildren, Lindsay, and Carly. Dotty grew up going to church at Claxton Church of Christ where my wife Carolyn, and her family also attended. Some of the first people I remember meeting when I started dating and going to church with Carolyn, were Dotty's grandparents, Johnny and Ethyl White, and her parents, Argus and Ruth Emmerson. Dotty attended church at Claxton and was a long time member of the Hayes Street Church of Christ at Lebanon after she moved to Lebanon. She was a good friend and neighbor to many, who loved to visit and grow beautiful flowers. Dotty's death occurred during the heavy rain and flooding in our area, so it was decided to have a grave side service at Claxton. A large crowd was present despite some having to drive several miles out of their way to be in attendance. -Ron Alexander

BENTCH - Gladys Clarissa Bentsch, the daughter of James Ambrose and Minnie Bell (Wright) Bentsch was born September 8, 1924 and departed this life Aug 12, 2013 at The Windsor Estates Center, Camdenton, MO. She grew up and lived her entire life in the Lick Creek and Cable Ridge Community near Edwards, MO. She was a faithful member of the Cable Ridge Church of Christ and attended as long as her health permitted. Many can remember her strong alto voice coming from the front seat. Some have said that they cannot remember going to church at Cable Ridge without Gladys being there. Gladys never married and devoted her life to taking care of her parents, Poppie and Mommie. After the death of her parents, she worked as a cook at the Climax Springs School District. Her hot rolls were a special treat to everyone. Her hand quilted quilts are prized possession of many. Gladys was preceded in death by her parents, her older brother, William, and her sister-in-law Juanita Bentsch, who was like a sister to her. She is survived by two brothers, Hugh Bentsch of Edwards, George Bentsch and his wife, Betty, of Richland, and a sister-in-law,

Nell Bentsch of Lebanon. The service was held at Reser Funeral Home in Warsaw, MO and burial was at Cable Ridge Cemetery. -Ron Alexander

SMITH - Lasca Bernice of Healdton, OK was born August 3, 1915. She passed away from this life Sunday, July 28, 2013 at the age of 97 years, 11 months and 28 days. She is survived by two daughters: LaVerne and husband Roger Porterfield of Healdton OK, Phyllis and husband Carl Johnson of Ada OK; Grandchildren Sara Hickman and husband Barry of Wilson, OK, Corey Johnson and wife Julie of Birmingham, AL, David Johnson and wife Stacy of Norman, OK, Brent Porterfield and wife Jennifer of Lone Grove OK, Five great-grandchildren: Jacob Hickman, Clayton and Abby Porterfield, Charlotte Johnson, and Whitt Johnson, Two brothers-in-law, W. M. Smith of Davis, OK and Charles Long of Ringling OK, Special nieces and nephew Tricia Curtis, Donna Renfro, Debbie Thurman, and Danny Long, Two special cousins: Rete Johnson of Moore OK and Neil Gibson of Dougherty, OK. She was preceded in death by her parents Walter and Hester Loveless, her Husband: Ralph Howard Smith Two Brothers: Carl Loveless and Don Loveless, One Sister: Betty Jean Long. Bernice taught school for 37 years and belonged to many professional and civic organizations. She received many awards throughout her lifetime. But her service to God was what took first place in her life. Bernice was a member of the Church of Christ for 80 years having been baptized by Fred Kirbo when she was 18 years old. A large crowd was present to show their respects to this dear, sweet, Godly woman and we will surely miss her. I was truly honored to have her for my third grade teacher and speak words of comfort at the service. -Gary Cannon

Field Reports

BLALOCK- Melvin Blalock, 214 Pearl St., Cleburne, TX 76031- August 21, 2013. The year 2013 has been a wonderful year in the Lord's work, yet it has been attended with some sadness as well. Several of the saints have departed this life and we have hope of seeing them again one day. We were saddened in this area at the loss of a great church leader, Brother J.B. Spradley. I will always treasure my association with Brother J.B. My wife and I became acquainted with J.B. and Louise just after we were married in 1969. We moved to Fort Worth and began attending the Trentman Ave. congregation where J.B. was a leader. J.B. and Louise gave us a lot of encouragement over the years and helped us in many ways. J.B. and the Trentman congregation were responsible for sending us to Amarillo, TX to help establish a congregation there in 1971. They sent us to Mineral Wells, TX in 1975 to assist in the work there. J.B. helped us to erect a new church building during our stay at Mineral Wells. I especially

remember with fondness our time together when we worked on that project. After our time at Mineral Wells, we set about to establish a congregation at Weatherford, TX. The Trentman congregation took the lead in helping us to do that work. J.B. was very good to assist us in that effort. He and the Trentman brethren came over and helped us to sheetrock our new building at Weatherford. Following the initial work at Weatherford we moved to Cleburne, TX, where we continue to labor at the present. Again J.B. and the brethren supported us and helped us in the Cleburne work. We were blessed to have an existing building at Cleburne, but J.B. and his grandsons installed the Central Heat/AC in our building at Cleburne. Alberta and I will always treasure our association with Brother J.B. and his sweet wife, Louise. They were truly great servants in the Lord's kingdom. They did much to encourage us in our evangelistic efforts. J.B. and the brethren were so good to help us and oversee our financial support for many years. As we fondly remember J.B. we are reminded of the words in Revelation 14:13. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." I continue to work with the following congregations in North Texas. I preach regularly at Cleburne, Weatherford, Mineral Wells, and Duncanville. It is a pleasure to live and work in this area. I have had the privilege over the last several months to preach at Ratliff City, Ok, San Angelo, TX, Lexington, Ky, and Crescent, Ok. It was good to be with all of these brethren. I held a meeting at Ratliff City and enjoyed my stay with Steve and Debbie Melton. Their hospitality was outstanding as usual. We enjoyed our meeting at Lexington, Ky, where Brother Bob Johnson works. It was good to be with the brethren there. We especially enjoyed our time with Bob and Gail. We could not have been treated better. It was good to have the following preachers at the meeting one or more times in addition to Bob who works there, Doug Hawkins, Philip Scott, Zac Evans and Todd Bernard. We are looking forward to our meeting with the Allen, TX congregation October 9-13 of this year. The congregation at Cleburne is doing well. We are blessed to have several young families in this congregation. We have three men in the congregation who are very capable teachers. This enables us to be free to help the other congregations nearby with their teaching. God has blessed us richly and we continue to pray for the brotherhood.

Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com September 12- In August we enjoyed a good meeting with the New Salem church near Brookhaven, MS. Our crowds were generally large and attentive. Hospitality was outstanding and good progress was made in a number of areas. Next we were privileged

to be in Mtn. Grove, MO for a meeting that was very well attended, especially by neighboring congregations. This is an ageing congregation, but they still press forward with zeal and courage. The Texas Labor Day meeting under the direction of Fossil Creek church in Ft. Worth was a real joy this year. Crowds were large, preaching and singing outstanding, and the association with fellow Christians uplifting and encouraging. The Lord willing we go next to Harrison, AR Sept. 18-22, Arlington, TX Oct. 16-20, Sharonville, OH Oct. 23-27, and London, KY Oct. 30-Nov.3. We look forward to each of these endeavors with hope and expectation. Our prayer is that the work of God will progress and flourish across this great land and everywhere around the world.

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA, 94550, e-mail, oldpaths@juno.com September 15- My apologies for being a couple of days late getting the paper out this month. We really enjoyed the meeting at Buffalo, MO. I had been there a number of years ago when the church was pretty small, but they now have a nice building and a good congregation as well. Brad Shockley works with them and does a good work. He divides his time between Buffalo and Bolivar and both efforts are growing. It was a pleasure to stay with them and we couldn't have been treated better. The hospitality of the congregation was also outstanding. We appreciated several preachers attending among whom were Ron Alexander, Smith Bibens, Billy Dickinson, Brad Shockley, and Ronny Wade. Area congregations attended very well and it seemed to me we had good crowds every service. We enjoyed seeing so many old friends from years past. We were told there were outsiders present every service and that made us happy. Unfortunately, there were no additions but we certainly hope good was done by the preaching of the Word. We look forward to a short meeting this coming weekend at Clovis, CA. It has been a number of years since we were there and we look forward to going back. Pat and I enjoyed hearing Clint DeFrance for one sermon at his meeting in Lodi last week. His sermon was timely and we pray we hear more of such preaching in the future. The home church is doing very well and we enjoy peace and harmony among all. Pray for us.

Stan Owens 8432 Cox Rd West Chester, OH 45069-Sept. 4th It has been quite awhile since my last report. We had a very enjoyable Spring meeting with Brother Rick Martin. He did some good preaching and presented timely sermons and we enjoyed having him and Sister Jane with us for a few days. I have also been privileged to hear Brethren Al Felder and Brad Shockley. Here at home we have been working on improving our singing and song leading by going over some basic fundamentals of music. I have also thoroughly enjoyed meetings at Imperial, NE and Bandy, KY and have spoken one or

more times at Kentucky congregations in Lexington, Bandy, and Green Acres Road in London. Keep The Faith.

Roger L. Owens Freeman Road Neosho, MO. 64850 I have recently heard of or read about a great need within our brotherhood for evangelism. We need men and families willing to spend and be spent for the cause of Christ. What is missing brethren? I hear folks talk about some men with too much zeal and I am here to tell you that we have too many members with little or no zeal. Everyone wishes for things to be smooth and easy, trouble free. That isn't realistic and we need to realize the truth. If you think doing the Lord's work is easy don't start. If you think God will just somehow make all our ills go away, think again. Christianity is a very difficult road but the only one worthy the effort of our life's business. No you will not get rich doing God's business on earth, but in heaven riches will be abundantly great in your name if you do His will here. All my life some have said it's too hard. Some preachers have told me the church will destroy your life and break your family apart. Brethren that is hogwash. I have spent my life doing and going even when the odds were against me. I don't regret a single mile and wish I could do more. I am sickened by the lazy attitude of brethren who just want to sit back and do nothing but Sunday Morning have to do as they say it. When we leave this world the only thing we take with us is our works good or bad. I am wondering are there any that really want to serve the Lord or have we outgrown the idea of service and dedication to Christ alone. Please if you have a desire to serve then step forward and let's get to it. If it were your family would you hold back? If it were your son or daughter would you say maybe tomorrow? It's time to get real and get busy. If you disagree tell me why? If you agree I want to know that others in the brotherhood feel the same way I do and are tired of the slothfulness of going through the motions that by the way lead to hell not heaven. Jesus said if you love me keep my commandments.

Brett Hickey, 8373 Highway 5 South, Mountain Home, AR, 72653; 870/736-0774; unityseeker@hotmail.com; September 10, 2013. Since last reporting in May, we have had four baptisms from the TV program in Springfield. A family of four took their stand for the truth through the Lexington, KY program. A sister took her stand after watching the program and attending the Baton Rouge congregation. After studies with Allen Bailey, Tommy Owens, and me, a couple in their twenties from Columbia, SC, obeyed the gospel. They contacted us after watching videos at LetTheBibleSpeak.com. A man called saying he obeyed the gospel from the Birmingham program; we hope he will begin worshipping scripturally. Let friends and family know Let the Bible Speak now airs

in Bakersfield (KUVI), Los Angeles (KDOC) and will begin reairing in Oklahoma City (KBSI) on October 6th. If you have email we can send you monthly updates on the TV program. A number who attend our weekly service in a Mountain Home nursing home are weak in body, but strong in mind. A wheelchair bound lady was baptized through these efforts this summer. Fourteen year old Mika was baptized largely as a result of Pat Kemp's influence. Frank Brancato's powerful preaching during our gospel meeting a short time earlier was also a major factor. Thirty different non-members and five who have gone astray attended this meeting. We have several promising studies in Springfield and Mountain Home. We hope some of these will be close to conversion for our meeting with Doug Hawkins, October 11-13. The Blevins family opened their home and heart to me during the meeting at Powe, MO. We were blessed to get better acquainted with the brethren there and to see support from Fieldstone, MO, Pocahontas, AR, Paducah, KY, and Memphis, TN. We trust God's word will bring forth fruit there. We rejoice over the three baptisms during our meeting at Blue Springs, KY. It was good to be among dear friends that week. Brethren attended from Indiana, Ohio, Lexington, London, Chestnut Ridge, Walnut Grove, Bandy, and Hill Top, KY. It was a joy to be at Temple, GA, after being away about twenty-five years. Brethren supported the meeting from Napoleon, Piedmont, Gadsden, Birmingham (AL), Columbus, Marietta, McDonough (GA), and Greenville, SC; at least eight non-members attended. The packed building and high enthusiasm made the meeting at the new congregation in Bolivar a real blessing. I know no congregation with a more serious short and long-term evangelistic plan than Bolivar. Brad Shockley works with the congregation here and is a big part of that emphasis. Every home in Bolivar knew about the meeting and a number of non-members attended. Congregations all over the Ozarks supported these efforts; Don and Diane Pruitt traveled from Rogers, AR, to be with us. It was an honor to be at the Labor Day meeting in California put on by the Oakdale congregation. We formed an instant bond with George and Cheryl DePonte. The evangelistic thrust proved effective and moved several leads from the TV program closer to taking a stand for the truth. Austin Maddox of Bedford, IN, spent two months with us this summer. He has the potential to be a fine gospel preacher. My upcoming meetings will be: Grapevine, TX (10/4-10/6); Indianapolis (10/16-10/20); Napoleon, AL (11/6-11/10); Bridgeport, TX (11/22-11/24). We look forward to the Preacher's Study at Grapevine in December and the Oklahoma New Year's meeting, Lord willing. I am greatly encouraged to be associated with hard-working evangelists, elders, teachers, and other Christians who zealously show unrelenting confidence in the great power of the gospel to save even in the U.S. today. May their tribe increase!

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DIVINE PATTERNS

By CARL M. JOHNSON

Many of the shirts I wore as a child were made by my late mother. I can vividly recall her spreading fabric on the dining room table, pinning a pattern to the material, and carefully cutting the fabric with scissors according to the pattern.

A pattern is a form, template, or example designed to be imitated or copied. We are actually surrounded by myriads of patterns and we spend most of our lives discovering, identifying, tracing or following them. Our education consists of learning and testing patterns. Our sciences and mathematics are centered in formulaic patterns, as are our works of art, music, and literature. Our games, from checkers to football, are patterned play. The poet Wallace Stevens describes our human need for orderly, predictable, and stable patterns as the “blessed rage for order.”

Such an abundance of patterns reflects a divine ordering of existence and should help us to lift our eyes from the many mundane patterns of daily life to more important divine patterns. Divine patterns are the fundamental laws, principles, and truths the Lord has given us to follow during our earthly journey that will ultimately lead us to heaven.

We desperately need these divine patterns because Jeremiah says, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (10:23). We must have divine guidance and God has always given His people patterns to follow.

In Genesis 6, God commanded Noah to build an ark and gave him a definite pattern for building it. God told Noah the kind of wood to use, the dimensions of the ark, the rooms to be included, and where to put the door and window. The Bible reports, “Thus did Noah according to all that God commanded him” (Gen. 6:22).

God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle and gave him a pattern that included a multitude of specifications, and He insisted Moses “make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount” (8:5).

Just as God gave Noah a pattern for building the ark, and Moses a pattern for building the tabernacle, so God has given us a pattern for building our lives as His children. He has given us a pattern for character (attitudes and conduct) and a pattern for the church (organization, name, doctrine, worship, plan of salvation, and mission). Just as Noah and Moses were obligated to build according to the pattern, so we are obligated (and privileged) to build according to the pattern God has given to us.

Paul told Timothy, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:13). The word “form” means “an example, pattern ...the pattern to be placed before one to be held fast and copied, model...” (Thayer 645). Paul’s statement is a plain declaration that there is a pattern, and the pattern consists of “words, which thou hast heard of me.”

Paul explains that the apostles and prophets in the early church received words by revelation from the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-13). These words were written down and constitute the New Testament, the pattern for regulating our lives in the age of Christianity. Paul says further that they are “sound words.” In other words they form a pattern of “true and incorrupt doctrine” (Thayer 634), and we dare not corrupt them.

If you were to add a pinch of arsenic to wholesome wheat flour it could become fatal to anyone who ingests it. If you add a pinch of opinion to wholesome apostolic words, they can become spiritually fatal (Gal. 1:6-9). Therefore, the divine pattern for the church consists of the sum total of everything the New Testament says about the church, nothing more or less. Equipped with this pattern we may be complete, thoroughly furnished unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17).

Paul was imprisoned in Rome when he wrote these words to Timothy, and he knew he would soon be executed (2 Tim. 4:6). You can sense, therefore, a note of urgency in his words. He pleads with Timothy to “Hold fast the pattern” and to share it with “faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

In spite of this impassioned plea some brethren argue vehemently that Paul’s words do not apply to us today and we have no authorized patterns regulating the church. Consequently, they believe the church is at liberty to organize, work, and worship in any way it pleases. Paul labels such beliefs as “will worship” and condemns it outright in Colossians 2:22-23.

Such beliefs also inevitably result in chaos; the kind mentioned in Judges 17:6 where everyone did that which was right in their own eyes.

Divine patterns, however, bring order from chaos, lessen our concerns with life’s changes, promote social and spiritual happiness, and clothe our lives with a larger sense of stability and meaning. May we give God glory for the gift of such patterns! cmjthebackpage@gmail.com