

One Heart

Volume 5, Issue 3

Fall 2012

Inside this issue:

Zeal Without Knowledge 1,4-6
Marion R. Fox

A Word From the Dean 2

Open Heavens 3,7
Benjamin J. Williams

Not Recognizable 8-9, 14
Frank R. Williams

A Voice From the Past: 10-12
Joe H. Blue

Are the Gospels New Testament Books? 13

Classes for FALL 15

Zeal Without Knowledge

by Marion R. Fox



This brief treatise will be derived from the words of Rom. 10:2 “For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.” In this treatise, we will show that there are several instances in which some have “zeal without knowledge.”

Saying “Loaf” at the Lord’s Supper

I remember a disturbance that occurred in the Lord’s church several years ago where a preacher protested strongly when a man used the word “loaf” when giving thanks for the bread during the Lord’s Supper. This preacher claimed that we should not use the word “loaf” because it was not used in the Scriptures for the bread used in the Lord’s Supper.

I certainly agree that we need to have biblical authority for everything we: (1) think, (2) say, and (3) do in spiritual matters (Col. 3:17). This brings up the question: “Do we have any kind of authority to use the word ‘loaf’ when giving thanks for the bread in the Lord’s Supper?” I admit that we have no explicit authority to use the word “loaf” because the word is not used in our English translations in passages relating to the Lord’s Supper. However, there is implicit authority to use the word “loaf” in the Lord’s Supper.

The Greek word translated “bread” is *artos* (pronounced *artos*). The Greek word *artos* is translated “loaf” in Mk. 8:14 (in both the KJV and the ASV). Therefore the word “bread” (used for the Lord’s Sup-

Continued on page 4



6001 Gardner Dr.

Oklahoma City, OK 73150-1001

Address Service Requested

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
OKLAHOMA CITY OK
PERMIT NO. 930



A Word From the Dean

by Frank R. Williams

The Fall 2012 classes are going well! The number of students is near the same as last year. We generally have between eighteen and twenty-four. The numbers are different each class period for a number of reasons. As pointed out in other reports, a number of our students have full-time jobs to support their families; thus, they work during the day. At times, they work overtime and are unable to be in class. They have the printed material, so they can read and study and come to class prepared to take a make-up test and turn in any homework.

Already the Fall 2012 classes have experienced something sadly different. One of our former students, Wendell Thomas, who had been suffering with cancer, passed away. The Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies expresses to his wife, Roxanna, and his family our deepest sympathy. His funeral was Friday, September 21st.

Second, another student, Richard Watt, also suffering from cancer had surgery on September 13th and will have to undergo chemo treatments. The surgery went well and we are most grateful!

To help our students get to class on time, we have two of our ladies students, who prepare meals which are served af-

ter the first class period. This has been a custom of the school for years. You can understand, having worked eight hours and sometimes more, they go home and prepare for class and not having to eat at home allows them to arrive for class on time. Our two ladies, Gladys Patterson and Judy Gore (and sometimes others), are greatly appreciated by all, students and faculty!

Our faculty remains the same as last year: Marion Fox, Jerry Gore, and Frank Williams. We are looking forward to the return of Mike Van Von Tungeln. We had hoped that he could be back in class this fall, but now we are looking toward the Spring 2013 classes for his return.

We have a number of our "preacher students" who are preaching, some have entered the work full-time, while others are taking advantage of doing fill-in preaching. Therefore, we ask congregations who receive One Heart, if you are in need of a fill-in preacher, give me a call: 405-382-1828, and generally, we have a student ready to preach!

While addressing the subject of preaching, please understand, Marion Fox and I are willing to preach. At this time, we are co-preaching at the Barnes congregation.

Teaching
Others To
Teach Others



Course Schedule for Fall '12

August 21 - December 11

	Class One	Class Two
1st Period 6:30-7:15 PM	Life of Jesus Frank R. Williams	Introduction to the Bible (III) Marion R. Fox
2nd Period 7:45-8:30 PM	Judges Frank R. Williams	Advanced Greek Marion R. Fox
3rd Period 8:30-9:15 PM	The Divided Kingdom (II) Jerry Gore	Biblical Flood (III) Marion R. Fox

www.okcsbs.com

SPECIAL CLASS: "Greek for Beginners" with Marion R. Fox
Monday Nights, 7:00-9:00 PM (Starting August 20)



What Can You Do to
Help Us "Teach Others
To Teach Others"?

2 Timothy 2:2



FIVE F PUBLISHING
The Published Works of Marion R. Fox
WWW.FIVEFPUBLISHING.COM

the lost the precious gospel of Christ? Does the local church identify with Paul's words: "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel" to the lost in my town? Where is our passion for saving the lost? Recall the words of Jesus: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). The only power the church has in lifting up Jesus to a lost world is in "the preaching of the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18). Yes, it is understood that the lost may see this as "foolishness," but my brethren, to the "saved it is the power of God" unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). Are you among the saved? The churches of Christ have no other such power! The gospel cannot be replaced with something else, as there is no other gospel, and there is no other

saving power (Gal. 1:6-8). It is not a matter of searching for "the" way to reach the lost with the gospel. It is a matter of using all ways within the authority of Christ to reach the lost with God's saving power. May we think deep and long on these words: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:23).

May the local church be once more "recognizable" with the churches of Christ of "yesterday" in her passion for lost souls! May we have the passion of our Lord and as we do so, let us remember Paul's words: "Let not the church be charged," in trying to be "all things to all people."

Open Heavens

by Benjamin J. Williams



In Deuteronomy 28:1-12, God explains to Israel the blessings that are in store for them if they keep their covenant with Him. The section ends with the words, "The LORD will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands. And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow."

On the one hand, God offered Israel a unique covenant. Despite the claims of many, we cannot lay hold to the same degree of material blessings that Israel enjoyed when they were faithful. One look at the persecuted and often impoverished early church is enough to confirm this point. That view of the church stands in stark contrast to the vision of Joel Osteen and others that teach wealth is created by faith and by simply speaking wealth into existence by declaration. From the Joel Osteen Ministry website, "When you get into agreement with God like that in your thoughts, words and actions, it opens supernatural doors and sets the blessing in motion. It allows Him to release the promises that already have your name on them! You can pull it out of the unseen spiritual realm over into the physical seen realm." What foolishness! The martyred dead in Christ did not lack faith, and any view that supposes otherwise is heresy.

On the other hand, the Deuteronomy text does paint for us a picture of God's changeless character. God is wealthy, and He desires to bless His people. He wants to open up the sky and


pour out blessings on his saints.

In Malachi 3:10, this idea is continued when God challenges the people to give their tithe according to their covenant "and thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need." He wants to bless and He dares the Israelites to dare Him to prove it! Even when Israel provoked Him in the wilderness, saying, "Can God spread a table in the wilderness?", God responded with blessings:

Psalms 78:19-25 (ESV) ... Therefore, when the LORD heard, he was full of wrath; a fire was kindled against Jacob; his anger rose against Israel, because they did not believe in God and did not trust his saving power. Yet he commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven, and he rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven. Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance.

God blesses so that we may know Him (Isaiah 45:5-8), and know Him we must.

This picture of a God longing to bless is challenged by the suffering that we experience in this world. Even while living faithfully under the Old Testament covenant, Israel suffered as all humans do. Israelites were not immune from death. Israel won wars, but was not much blood shed just in the fighting? Even on days of victory, they mourned for fallen heroes. Back home, they



Faculty:

Marion R. Fox, director

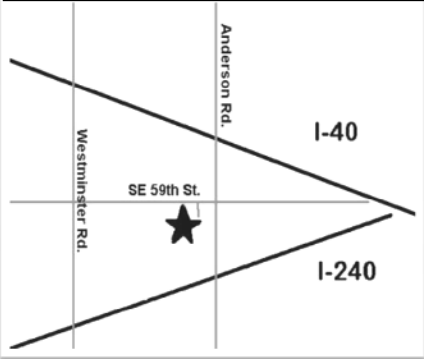
Frank R. Williams, dean

Jerry Gore, instructor

Mike VonTungeln, instructor

The Oklahoma City School of Biblical Studies is a tuition free, flexible night school designed to meet the needs of every Bible student. Whether you are interested in preaching the gospel, being an elder or deacon, or just learning more about the Bible, we have the courses you need to accomplish your goals. Our night schedule allows you to continue your normal daily routine with minimal interference. Our staff is qualified and experienced, offering many years of combined preaching experience from which the student may learn. For more details and a full curriculum, visit our website!

www.okcsbs.com



per) could just as well be translated “loaf.” After I pointed this out to this preacher, he stopped making it an issue.

Referring to “My Church”

May we say: “The church of Christ is my church?” I have heard a number of members of the Lord’s church scold someone when they used this expression. Usually the one doing the scolding will say: “It is the Lord’s church, it is not your church.” The problem with this is that the one objecting has not considered that the English expression: “My church” does not always connote the idea of ownership. For example, I can say that the United States is my country and not be claiming to own the United States. The possessive case can also connote relationship in the English language. This is most certainly what most people are saying when they say: “my church.” Dana and Mantey list several uses of the Greek genitive case, two of which are: “The Genitive of Possession” and “The Genitive of Relationship.” (p. 76)

The Lord’s church is referred to as: “... the church of the firstborn ...” (Heb. 12:23). The word translated “firstborn” is plural in the Greek. This is even evident from the English translation. Note how the plural verb “are” is used in this verse. Therefore it is not wrong to say “my church,” if we are claiming a relationship with the church.

Was Paul a Man-pleaser?

I have read where several men claimed that Paul had been a “man-pleaser” when he persecuted the church. This claim is usually made from their misinterpretation of Gal. 1:10. I point out that there is

a difference between “pleasing men” and “being a man-pleaser.” The difference is in the motives of the one who is pleasing men. One might inadvertently please men by ignorantly doing things that are wrong (while thinking he was doing right). This is what Paul did prior to his conversion (Gal. 1:10). Paul sought to please men by giving up his liberty (1 Cor. 10:33). Note that this is the same word used in Gal. 1:10. The term “men-pleasers” (Eph. 6:6; Col. 3:22) carries a different meaning. Thayer defined the word translated “men-pleasers” as: “... studying to please men, courting the favor of men” (Thayer, p. 46) Note that a man-pleaser is one who courts the favor of men. Paul thought he was doing the will of God when he persecuted the church (1 Tim. 1:12-14). Remember that Paul did not violate his conscience when he persecuted the church (Acts 23:1). Paul thought that he ought to be persecuting the church (Acts 26:9), that is he thought it was God’s will that he persecute the church.

Paul was not a man-pleaser (one who was courting the favor of men) because he thought he was serving God (pleasing God) when he persecuted the church. Paul was ignorant of the truth (that his actions were contrary to the will of God) when he persecuted the church. If Paul had known that he was not pleasing God, his conscience would have bothered him.

Is Everyone who Teaches False Doctrine a False-teacher?

Most gospel preachers have changed their minds about at least one doctrinal point since they began preaching. I admit that I

Are the Four Gospels New Testament Books?

by Hugo McCord (1911-2004)



It is sad that a gospel preacher writes that “none of Jesus’ teaching in the four gospels was N.T. teaching, it was rather a restatement of the true teaching of Moses’ law (*Understanding the Bible*, p. 1). ... Jesus’ teaching was not “a restatement of the true teaching of Moses’ law,” but new teaching for the new covenant. Notice how Jesus modified and altered the law of Moses:

- You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.” But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment (Mt. 5:21-22).
- You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not commit adultery.” But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Mt. 5:27-28).
- Furthermore it has been said, “Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.” But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except fornication leaves her debased, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery (Mt. 5:31-32).
- Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.” But I say to you, do not swear at all (Mt. 5:33-34).
- You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I tell you not to resist an evil per-

son. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also (Mt. 5:38-39).

- You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you (Mt. 5:43-44).
- The word “neighbor” in Moses’ law only meant a fellow Jew (Lev. 19:18), but Jesus taught that it should include a “Samaritan” (Luke 10:25-37).

Our erring preacher brother writes that if everyone accepts his idea that “none of Jesus’ teaching in the four gospels was N.T. teaching,” then “the principle [sic] cause of all the confusion among churches of Christ on Matthew 19 and marriage, divorce, and remarriage” would be eliminated. But Matthew 19 does not give “a restatement of the true teaching of Moses’ law.” Instead, Jesus rejected “the true teaching of Moses’ law,” a law allowing divorce “for every cause” (*kata pasan aitian*, Mt. 19:3), and taught that one cause only, fornication, allows an honorable divorce. Furthermore, he taught that a divorce and remarriage without the one cause is adultery (Mt. 19:9). If Jesus has “all authority in heaven and on the earth” (Mt. 28:18), and if he is the author of “the law of the Spirit of life” (Rom. 8:2), surely uninspired preachers ought to tremble if they make divorcees comfortable who are remarried without the one exception.

From “*Mishandling the New Testament*”

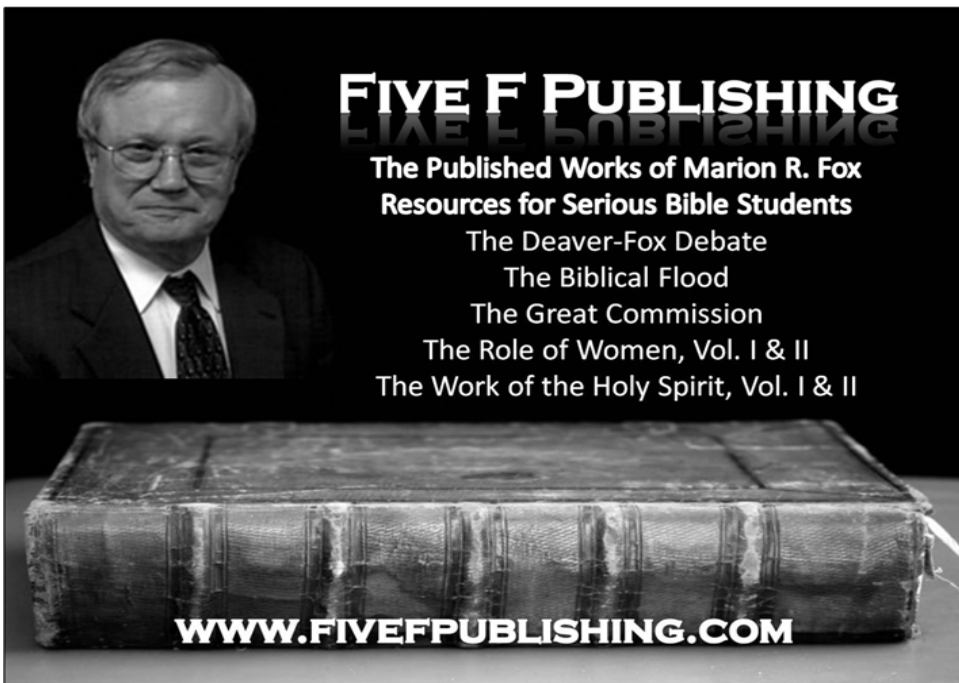
chief apiece. When the meeting closed there was a three-inch snow on the ground, and we walked home a distance of 46 miles. I have gotten off the train at Hardy, Arkansas, in the night, and taken my suitcase and walked home that night, a distance of 25 miles. Many times I have set up in a cold depot all night, because I did not have the price of a bed and enough to take me on to my meeting. I have done without something to eat in my travels just because I did not have money to buy it and get on to meeting.

Mary is the bridge that has taken me over. She has never said not go, come home, or complained in the least. She has always said, “you go and preach, and do all the good you can, and I will take care of things at home,” and she has done a fine job of it.

I have been stoned, beaten with green walnuts, and with eggs. I have had dynamite put under the pulpit while I was preaching. I have had to be guarded while I preached. I have had them to threaten to take me out of the pulpit and fix me so I would never be able to get in another one. I have had them threaten to hang me. I have suffered all this for the cause of our Lord, and yet have not begun to suffer what our Lord suffered, or the apostles.

I am now 68 years old and want to preach many more years. To God be all the glory for the great Victory.

This brief autobiography was written in January, 1944, at the request of Roy L. Ruckman of Sayre, Oklahoma.



have learned things since I began preaching. It is plain that a preacher who studies the Scriptures will learn new things as he studies. Was that gospel preacher a “false teacher” because he had a limited understanding of some biblical topic? Our brotherhood has not generally made what one teaches on “the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38) a test of fellowship. It is clear that the gift of the Holy Spirit is either miraculous or it is non-miraculous (principle of the excluded middle). Now, should all of those who advocate that the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) is miraculous (that includes me) mark all of those who claim the gift of the Holy Spirit is non-miraculous as false teachers? One of these two positions is false doctrine (false doctrine is doctrine that is not true). Note my argument:

First Premise: If all those who teach false doctrine are false teachers, then all those who teach error on the gift of the Holy Spirit are false teachers.

Second Premise: All those who teach false doctrine are false teachers (claim of some brethren).

Conclusion: All those who teach error on the gift of the Holy Spirit are false teachers.

It is evident that this claim (that all those who teach false doctrine are false teachers) implies that we can only fellowship those who agree with us in every single doctrine.

But one will likely reply: “If one who teaches false doctrine is not necessarily a false teacher, then what does it take to make one a false teacher?” We need to define the expression “false teacher” in order to answer this question. The expression “false teacher” is only found in 2 Pet. 2:1. This expression is a translation of the Greek word *ψευδοδι-*

ασκαλος (*pseudodidaskalos*). Thayer defines this word: “(ψευδης and διδασκαλος), a false teacher.” (Thayer, p. 675) The adjective *ψευδης* that modifies the noun *διδασκαλος* sets forth the character of the teacher. He is a dishonest teacher, that is what makes him a false-teacher, not the fact that he teaches false doctrine.

Does this mean that we should fellowship everyone who is “honestly mistaken in his error” since he is not a false teacher? Some false doctrines will not cause one to be lost if he teaches the doctrine. Some false doctrines will cause one to be lost, if he teaches the doctrine. Paul, in Rom. 14:1-6, teaches that two men may disagree on matters and still be in fellowship. What doctrine (or kind of doctrine) should cause a break in fellowship within the Lord’s church? Clearly, if a doctrine would cause one to sin by practicing what is taught by the doctrine, then we should not fellowship one who teaches that doctrine.

How should we treat a false teacher when we confront his error? Paul told Titus to “reprove them sharply” (Tit. 1:10-13 [particularly verse 13]). Paul told Timothy to be gentle with one who is honestly mistaken (2 Tim. 2:23-26). The false teacher is a deceiver (Tit. 1:10) and must be dealt with sharply (Tit. 1:13).

Is Everyone who Sins a Sinner?

It is evident (1 Jn. 1:8-10) that we all sin (at least occasionally). But one may reply: “What about the words of John in 1 Jn. 3:4-9?” John said that some do not sin in this passage (sinne[n]t not [vs. 6]). Since we all sin (1 Jn. 1:8-10), are we not as those who “hath not seen him, neither knoweth him.” (1 Jn. 3:6)? Since we all

sin (1 Jn. 1:8-10), are we not “of the devil” (1 Jn. 3:8)?

How can these apparent contradictions be explained? The answer lies in the nature of the Greek verbs. The Greek present tense entails: “Continued action, or a state of incompleteness, is denoted by the present tense, this kind of action is called durative or linear. The action of the verb is shown in progress, as going on.” (Davis, p. 25) The words “doeth” (1 Jn. 3:4), “sinneth” (1 Jn. 3:6), “doeth” (1 Jn. 3:8), and “doeth” (1 Jn. 3:9) are all in the Greek present tense. “The present tense indicates progressive action at the present time — ‘he is losing.’” (Summers, p. 11) When it is said of one that he “doeth” sin, it is saying that he makes sin to be a practice (a way of life). One who makes sin a way of life “hath not seen him, neither knoweth him” and is “of the devil.”

Now this lays the groundwork for understanding the meaning of the word “sinner.” Thayer defines this word as: ἁμαρτωλός “devoted to sin, a (masc. or fem.) sinner ... a. not free from sin. ... b. pre-eminently sinful, especially wicked ...” (Thayer, p. 31) Thayer has a Calvinistic background that leads him to make comments where he claims that all men are sinners. His first and last definitions “devoted to sin” and “pre-eminently sinful, especially wicked” are the only definitions that will fit the context of the New Testament.

The only time a member of the church (a child of God) is called a sinner is in Jas. 5:20 and he needs to be converted. He has become devoted to sin and needs to be converted back to being devoted to God. Clearly, children of

God are not to be sinners (devoted to sin), but they may occasionally sin (either due to weakness or to ignorance) without being a sinner.

Allow me to go back to the Greek tenses to explain this matter. The Calvinists (Dana and Mantey) wrote: “It is well to notice particularly the difference between the aorist and present infinitive. The aorist infinitive denotes that which is eventual or particular, while the present infinitive indicates a condition or process. ... ἁμαρτεῖν (aorist tense - MRF) is to commit a sin, while ἁμαρτανεῖν (present tense - MRF) is to be a sinner.” (D & M, p. 199) These comments by Dana and Mantey are in harmony with the points I have just made in this treatise. Christians may sin occasionally (aorist tense), but they must not be habitually committing sin (present tense — being sinners [devoted to sin by making it a habitual practice]).

Summary

Sometimes members of the Lord’s church are guilty of having zeal without knowledge (just like the Jews were in Rom. 10:2). We may either falsely charge people with sin in our great zeal to keep the church pure or we may use terms that convey unsound doctrine from our ignorance. As we study the Scriptures in our daily study of God’s word, let us make application of what we learn. When we find ourselves about to rebuke someone, let us be certain that they deserve the rebuke. We most certainly want to keep the church pure, but we need to be certain that what we are rebuking is, in fact, sinful.

brethren would pay as much as \$5.00 for a two weeks’ meeting. The first money I received for my work was seventy-five cents. Brother Jack Warner, near Poughkeepsie, Arkansas, gave it to me, and that made me rich for a while.

On November 1, 1896, I preached my first sermon at Lebanon Schoolhouse near Poughkeepsie. I traveled with Brothers George and Garner until Christmas that year, and in that time I preached six times. I then started out by myself. I went into Sharp County and preached out in the sticks, in homes and schoolhouses. I had in my saddle-pockets the same change of clothes, my Bible, the Gospel Plan of Salvation by T.W. Brents, and four cents in my pocket. I did not say a word to anyone about my poverty. I was afraid they would think I was preaching for money. I preached all that year (1897) and baptized 75 and established one congregation. The brethren paid me \$19.00 for my work that year. In May of that year my father sent me \$10.00 to buy me a suit of clothes. I bought them with the \$10.00, and then I was in fine shape for the work. Many days I went without dinner because I did not have the money to buy it.

In the fall of 1897 (November 9) I was married to Miss Mary Montgomery, and that was the best trade I ever made. She had a mare and sidesaddle, one cow, one sheep, and \$25.15. We set up to keep house, and I must say that no one with all their fine houses was as happy as we were. Mary said she would cross the mountain by my side. I made a crop in 1898, and I fed my team night and morning in the dark. I would plow as long as I could see at night, and by sunup or before I was at my plow. Mary was with me with a hoe, and we made a fine crop. We settled down in the neighborhood where

Mary was raised and have been here ever since. I have never moved. I preached every Sunday and Sunday night while I was making my crop that first year.

When we were married we had six members of the Church of Christ in the neighborhood. In the same neighborhood we had a Baptist Church, Methodist Church, Holiness, and Presbyterians, but today we have only the church in the neighborhood, and there has not been a sectarian sermon preached in the neighborhood in 35 years.

I made four crops after we were married, and the rest of the time I have been doing evangelistic work. We have remained on the farm all the time. We have our orchard, garden, cows, hens, hogs, horses, and goats. We have been married 46 years, and Mary has made two trips with me for meetings. She has been busy on the farm caring for the children, stock, garden, and chickens. We have bought 25 pounds of meat in the 46 years. We have never bought any butter, laundry soap, or vegetables of any kind. We never did buy any wood. We have raised three children, two of our own, and an orphan girl. I have conducted 107 debates. I have one of the best collections of religious books in the state.

I have never been the man to complain about what the brethren have paid me for my work. I preached monthly (for a year) for a congregation and held their meeting, and they paid me 14.00 for my work. I preached monthly for another congregation, twenty miles away, and held their meeting, and they paid me one dollar and a bushel of seed corn. Brother O. L. Hays and I were called to Cotter, Arkansas to hold a meeting in 1904 in the month of January, and they paid us \$7.00 and a handker-

by Joe H. Blue (1875-1954)

I was born September 18, 1875 in Izard County, Arkansas near Mt. Pleasant. The fall I was born my parents moved six miles southeast near where Cushman is now, in Independence County on a farm. We lived there until the day I was eleven years old, and then we moved into Fulton County near Salem, Arkansas. My father, bought 220 acres of land in the woods, and we went to clearing and fencing it with rails.

There were twelve of us children—seven boys and five girls. We attended the neighborhood schools which were about four months in the year. My father was a gospel preacher, but did not preach very much. He said he had to stay with us boys to keep us out of the pen. I obeyed the gospel of Christ when I was sixteen years old under the preaching of the lamented W. A. Schultz, but was baptized by J. M. Billingsley. I attended worship at home, and read my Bible every day.

When I was eighteen years old I attended a ten months school at Agnos, Arkansas taught by W. R. Chestnut, and while there in school I worshipped with the congregation at Agnos, and there I received many good lessons from the brethren which have been a great help to me all the way through life. The fall I was 19 years old I traded a long-legged mule for a year's schooling at Viola, Arkansas. My father thought I made a bad trade, and said that I had lost a good mule. I was under the great teacher E.M. Perkins who died at Enid, a few years ago. I just had a change of clothes, and that was all. The year I was twenty years old I entered



school at Salem, Arkansas under Professor J.H. Caldwell, I boarded at home, and rode horseback to my school.

When the school was out, I began traveling with Brothers Willie H. George and S.C. Garner. I owned a mare and saddle, and my father gave me a pair of saddle-pockets and a Bible. I just had one change of clothes and fifty cents in money. I left home crying on October 1, 1896, and rode thirty miles that day to join Brothers George and Garner who were in a meeting near Sage, Arkansas. They did the preaching, and I would read a chapter and lead in prayer, and that was as far as I would go in the work. All three of us went together from place to place on horseback holding meetings. The

watched time and disease steal their loved ones. Had God truly blessed them?

The early church surely wrestled with this same conflict. God had given them a kingdom, but that kingdom entailed suffering and death on the part of its citizens. The response of the New Testament to this dilemma is to present Jesus as the true Blessing of God. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus is shown at his baptism as standing beneath “open heavens” (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10-11; Lk 3:21-22). In Mark’s account, the heavens are not merely opened, but “torn open” (ESV) by the God who longs to bless. In John 1:51, Jesus offers this sentiment in his own words, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” Read your New Testament and see if this motif is not repeated. What does Stephen see when the window of heaven is opened? “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56, ESV). What does John see when the window of heaven is opened? “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True ... He is clothed

in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ... On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords” (Revelation 19:11-16, ESV).

Truly God has opened the sky and blessed us, not with manna or even the “bread of angels.” “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (John 6:32-33, ESV). Well spoke the apostle Paul, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3, ESV). Jesus is the true sign of God’s desire to bless and the fulfillment of God’s promise to do so. “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32, ESV) God, through His Son, now offers more blessings than we would ever need. As in the wilderness, the sky has opened and the Bread of Heaven has come down.

Apologetics • Historical Research • Greek Studies
Articles Written by Benjamin J. Williams

www.darkcanopy.com



Not Recognizable

by Frank R. Williams

In the early 1970's, I asked an older preacher, being a young preacher and having been a Christian but for about four years, the following question: "How does the church today compare with the church of thirty years ago?" He replied, "You would not recognize it!" He was not speaking of changes in methods of teaching/preaching; such as sermons on bed sheets, black boards, to overhead projectors. Nor would he be addressing the use of power-points sermons today and the use of the internet. No, he was speaking of the church herself! If this was true of the church forty years ago (and it was), then how much more is it true of the church today?

New methods of teaching/preaching, such as the power-point sermon, is a most welcome change! And the church has not yet learned to use the power of the internet even near to what it has to offer. Then, cable television, locally and on satellite, both nationally and internationally, is just waiting for the local church to wake up to the possibilities! Brethren, we still have not learned the power of the local radio, newspaper, and the Post Office. All of which have great possibilities of reaching the lost with the gospel. Then, we must not forget the "old fashioned" home Bible study. Direct and personal, a teacher and a few lost souls studying the Bible in the living-room may still be the best evangelistic tool, and it costs nearly nothing! No, the words "not recognizable" under which this is written, have nothing to do with any of these. Nor does it have anything to

do with singing by seeing the words on a screen and not on the page of a song book.

The "unrecognizable" has to do with the church herself! The "old" preachers of the by-gone years would say by way of warning the church: "We are only one generation away from apostasy." It was true of Old Testament Israel and it is true of New Testament Israel, the churches of Christ. If the Old Testament teaches us anything, and it certainly does (Rom. 15:4, 1 Cor. 10:11), then it teaches us this fearful truth: "We are only one generation away from apostasy!" The apostle would write to us, as he did the Corinthian church: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (verse 12). It is feared the churches of Christ of today, the one institution God created to reach the lost with the saving gospel of Christ, may feel and think as did the church in Laodicea: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," to which Jesus replied: "and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). It was to this church that Jesus said some misunderstood words: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot" (Rev. 3:15). To help us understand the words of Jesus, the following is here given, as one writer put it: "The appropriate interpretation involves a metaphor that certainly would have been understood by the Laodiceans and would have stung their civic pride—their

water. Unlike the refreshingly cold water of neighboring Colossae and the healing hot spring waters of Hierapolis, the Laodicean's imported lukewarm water was ineffective." Both hot and cold water help heal the body, but not lukewarm water. The idea may be expressed in this: "Your deeds are neither spiritually refreshing nor healing." In fact, in Hierapolis the temperature of the spring water was 95 degrees! Jesus is saying. "They are worthless. I will spit you out of my mouth," Is it possible that Jesus is saying the same thing to some "churches of Christ" today?

The church of Christ, the one universal body made up of local churches of Christ, is unlike any other institution. She was purchased with the blood of Jesus (Acts 20:28), he is her savior (Eph. 5:23), he is her head (Eph. 5:23), she is subject to him (Eph. 5:24), the saved are added to her (Acts 2:47), and she will be delivered to the Heavenly Father when time is no more (1 Cor. 15:24). The universal church works only through these local, autonomous churches. Each having the same responsibilities! These responsibilities are threefold: 1) she is to worship God "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), and all such worship must be "done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40); she is to help those who are in need, both in the church and out of the church, but "especially" "the household of faith" (Acts 6:1-3; Gal. 6:10); and 3) her mission is "according to the eternal purpose which he (God, FRW) purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11) and that mission is to teach/preach the gospel to the lost. The church is not all things to all people, but she is restricted in her authority to work. Some most striking words appear in a context of helping the widows, Paul

wrote: "let not the church be charged" (1 Tim. 6:16). These may be the most unheard words in "the churches of Christ" today, as local churches appear to be making every effort to becoming "all things to all people." The word "charged" (Greek, *bareo*) means "to burden, weigh down, depress." It is understood that churches are, like most families, having trouble with their budgets. It may be a good time for all churches of Christ who work under the authority of Christ to look at their budgets and what the local church is responsible for doing, charged with doing, and taking the opportunity to adjust accordingly!

The mission of the churches of Christ is teaching/preaching the gospel to the lost, and this must be done with a passion! The church's mission is that of Jesus: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). If the church is to be "the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23), then, her passion must be fixed on her mission! A church that does not love the lost is no church of Christ! It is here, in her mission, that the church is most UNRECOGNIZABLE from the church of yesterday. Any number of "things," just name them one by one, take the money, the time, and the energy, of the local church away from her mission! To help understand the point, answer this question: "What do elders spend most of their time talking about in their meetings?" Churches are generally surrounded with lost souls! How many members are charged with reaching the lost souls with the gospel of Christ? Is there an elder who is charged with local evangelism? How many deacons are responsible for leading others with getting the gospel to the lost? How many members actually work in teaching