

# *Oddities in Pattern Theology*

*By: Dallas Burdette*

Unless we succeed in finding and isolating the germ or virus which [that] produces division we will continue to fracture and fragmentize ourselves. The treatment of symptoms is not enough. If we debate every currently divisive issue into oblivion our children will find others over which to divide. We must make a radical departure from our previous methods and explore on a deeper level than ever before. We have been too shallow and superficial in the past. It is obvious that we must also be prepared for a shock because what we find may run counter to our every tradition. It may actually frighten us by some of its implications.<sup>1</sup>

The germ that seems to be the culprit of division within the Churches of Christ is *pattern theology* associated with a so-called worship service carried out on Sunday morning. Pattern theology is the belief that God has ordained a specific pattern or arrangement for certain rituals to be performed on Sunday morning in a so-called worship service in order for our worship to be acceptable to God. This concept is generally expressed as five acts of worship. This philosophy is based upon God's admonition to Moses concerning the Tabernacle. The Hebrews' author cites the Old Testament to call attention to the exactness that Moses had to adhere to in the construction of the Tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

From this passage, many believers surmise that God has enacted an exact pattern for a Sunday morning worship service. But the question confronting every biblical exegete is: What does "according to the pattern" have reference to? Can we apply this Scripture legitimately to the twenty-first century for scriptural authority to bind the ritualistic five acts that are commonly called worship by many within the Churches of Christ? Yet, this action of binding five acts has evolved into a spiritual warfare among many sincere Christians.

Throughout the various segments of the Restoration Movement within the Churches of Christ, we discover numerous responses to pattern theology that governs the so-called five acts of worship. How should the five acts be performed on Sunday morning? Our answer depends on the congregation's particular theological slant. Each local church decides the blueprint, or model, that is imposed upon its members. Is there an outline, or trademark, for a Christian worship service? If so, what is the example to be observed? Who decides the answer concerning the five ritualistic acts? Every Christian, depending on his or her theological heritage, has a different design for a worship service. For many Christians the blueprint concerns missionary societies, Bible colleges, orphan homes, Sunday morning collection, common cup, manner of

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Ketcherside, "Our Personal Pattern," *Mission Messenger* 32 (March 1970): 33.

distributing the bread (pinch or break), singing with or without instrumental accompaniment, and so on.

The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate (not to impugn the motives of other Christians) the utter futility of the concept of pattern theology that is presently advocated within some Churches of Christ; that is to say, five acts of worship performed in a prescribed manner in order for our worship to be acceptable to God so that our worship will not be in vain. We quickly realize that there is something wrong with the current way of thinking as we analyze the innumerable scenarios of “worship services” as advanced by a variety of factions within the Churches of Christ.

The stories employed in this analysis of *pattern theology* are for illustrative purposes only, not for the target of castigating other believers, regardless as to how odd certain traditions may seem to this writer. The accounts are not cited in order to argue the correctness or incorrectness of either side but to establish the outright divisiveness of this hermeneutic technique. Having said this, I still express dismay, throughout this chapter, at the gullibility of God’s children for their willingness to accept so many odd patterns in their concept of pattern theology. Is there something wrong with “**according to the pattern**” theology as a hermeneutic, which is to say, *patterns* as interpreted and practiced by many Christians within the Churches of Christ? Should we seek other slogans to express more adequately the thoughts of God to men and women? In denying *pattern theology*, as it is currently taught, are we denying that there is an absolute standard by which individuals are to govern their lives? The question that baffles everyone is: Has God ordained a *pattern* to be observed in a so-called “worship service”?

The confusion stems, as stated above, from a misapplication of a well-known text—Hebrews 8:5. This Scripture is cited by many well-meaning Christians to promote certain procedures as obligatory (commanded) upon other believers when they assemble for a so-called worship service. In other words, there is a pattern to be observed by the faithful in Christ. But one of the problems individuals run into is: What is the paradigm? Each fellowship has its own ritual(s) that centers on “five acts” of worship.<sup>2</sup> As a young preacher, I, too, was taught the necessity of the five acts in order for there to be true worship on the part of the worshipper. On the other hand, these five acts had to be performed in a prescribed way in order for worship to be “in Spirit and in truth.” This odd concept of worship is still maintained by many within the Stone/Campbell Movement. The late Dabney Phillips (1972-1992), a former professor of mine,

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<sup>2</sup> For an illustration of this philosophy see Winfred Clark, “No Pattern for Worship???” *Words of Truth* 28 (June 12, 1992): 1, 3, where he writes:

Well meaning people would say, “There is no place where you have in one case of verse all things that we do in worship,” or they say, “the New Testament does not contain a minute pattern for every detail of the work and worship of the church.” Thus, to such people there is no pattern. Sometimes that person would decry the idea of “proof texts.”

See also Jerri Manasco, “It’s Really No Surprise,” *Ibid.*, 4. For additional information concerning these five acts, see Clark, *Words of Truth*, *Ibid.*, 28: 1.

and, I might add, a very devout Christian, summarized this philosophy of *pattern theology* by calling attention to other patterns dealing with the church:

The Restoration movement began as a religious thrust to restore in faith and practice the church that Jesus built in the first century. The New Testament was the pattern for the name, organization, work and worship of the church.<sup>3</sup>

Phillips zeroed in on three additional patterns, namely, **name, organization, and work**. But he did not leave out of his list the so-called worship service. The Stone/Campbell Movement is not only divided over the worship pattern, but also over the name, organization, and work of the church. Many well-meaning Christians advocate this *pattern theology* concept for the church for the twenty-first century. As a result of this theory of *pattern theology*, many believers conclude that unless we put into practice his or her understanding of the so-called *pattern*, then we are not Christians. Phillip's remarks about Reformation preachers who were not a part of the Stone/Campbell Movement is quite revealing. He captures the thinking of many who advance the notion of a specific *pattern*. He says,

James O'Kelly [1735-1826], Elias Smith [1769-1846], and Abner Jones [1772-1841] were looking away from denominationalism and were seeking a pattern for Christian unity. It is regrettable that they were unable to journey all the way back to the New Testament, for the pattern is there (Hebrews 8:5).<sup>4</sup>

It is not uncommon for individuals who espouse *pattern theology* to deny that others are Christians who do not conform to the rigid standards imposed by their interpretative community. The concept of *pattern theology* is based on Hebrews 8:5. But this theory of blueprint belief is not unique to Phillips, for almost every division within the Churches of Christ advocates a precise paradigm for a worship service. In spite of this plea for uniformity in the worship ceremony, there is no consensus as to the exact pattern to be observed among the various fellowships within the Churches of Christ.

The belief that no one is a Christian except those who conform to the party cry is not unique to anyone of the numerous splinter groups within the Stone/Campbell Movement.<sup>5</sup> If we are outside a particular brand of orthodoxy, then we are not Christians. In other words, we must practice a particular pattern of worship when saints come together as a collective body of

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<sup>3</sup>Dabney Phillips, *Restoration Principles and Personalities* (University, AL: Youth In Action, Inc., nd) 3. I read this book and discovered that the author was very subjective (personal/biased) rather than objective (impartial/detached) in his analysis of what he calls the Restoration Movement.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 5. I do not know if Phillips considered these men Christians.

<sup>5</sup> An example of this mentality is prevalent among the one-cup and non-Sunday school Church of Christ. For instance, see Bruce Roebuck, "Tearing Down the Walls," *Old Paths Advocate* LXVII, no. 10 (October 1995): 1, where he writes: "In the bygone days of yesteryear men sought to tear down this wall. They introduced individual communion to their own demise. Having left the pattern they split brethren and condemned themselves by adding to the Word of God." See also Billy D. Dickinson, "False Teachers and Fellowship," Ibid., 9, where he says, "There were those who fought against these innovations—standing firmly on the New Testament pattern for worship."

believers; otherwise, the odd fellow is on his way to hell,<sup>6</sup> that is, a torture chamber in which individuals will burn forever.<sup>7</sup> Offshoots are rampant among the saints. Hatred proliferates through the innumerable pieces of the so-called Restoration Movement. Each organization claims to be the “loyal church.”

If a congregation can refer to herself as “loyal,” then this expression gives some credence to her existence. To illustrate the expression “loyal church,” as many Christians employ it, an example is called forth from my earlier years as a boy preacher. The first one-cup and non-Sunday school congregation founded in Montgomery, AL did not accept the use of individual communion cups in the distribution of the Lord’s Supper nor did they embrace the modern day Sunday school. As a result of these beliefs, this congregation did not recognize any other congregation in Montgomery as a “true” church. In fact, our sign read: “The Loyal Church Meets Here.”<sup>8</sup> We must be a part of our own particular pattern of worship in order to be classified as a member of the “loyal” church. Don L. King, editor of the *Old Paths Advocate*, writes with this narrow mindset as to who is and who is not a child of God:

**We believe people are going to be lost for using more than one cup.** Surely, we believe that! If people are not going to be lost for using more than one then let’s give up the fight and heal the division caused by those who insisted on using more than one. If it is wrong to use more than one cup in the Lord’s Supper I can’t worship with those who use more than one. If I can’t worship with them I can’t fellowship them and **I can’t fellowship you if you do!** Is that simple? (sic). . . . Individual cups are a sinful violation of the Bible pattern. If it is right to use one cup then it has to be wrong to use more than one.<sup>9</sup> (Emphasis mine—bold)

This citation from King is a classic example of the factional and judgmental attitude that is so rampant among the countless Churches of Christ, not just the one-cup movement. Abhorrence or loathing proliferates throughout the various pieces of the so-called Restoration Movement. In each of the twenty-five or more divisions, each one—almost without exception—claims to be the “loyal” or the “true” church. Does this cliché ring a bell today? Even though many congregations do not print these words on their signs, nevertheless, they still maintain this belief by not recognizing other believers as Christians. Tensions still mount within the Churches of Christ over the so-called pattern. Thus, separation still haunts God’s people over a particular way of serving God on Sunday mornings, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m., that is to say, whatever hour has been designated for worship.

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<sup>6</sup> See Sam Dawson (b. 1943), “Jesus’ Teaching on Hell,” in Sam Dawson, *Essays on Eschatology: An Introductory Overview of the Study of Last Things*, Second Edition, (Bowie, Texas: SGC Press, 2015), 229-274, for an in-depth study of Jesus’ teaching. He demonstrates from Jesus’ teaching that the current concept of a burning hell is not a biblical concept. I highly recommend this book.

<sup>7</sup> See Don L. King, “Proper Perspective,” *Old Paths Advocate* LXVII, no. 9 (September 1995): 2.

<sup>8</sup> This congregation, as stated above, had several name changes in her early years: Madison Ave. Church of Christ, Union St. Church of Christ, Rotary St. Church of Christ, and finally, Vonora Ave. Church of Christ, which is still her name to this day November 14, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Don L. King, “Proper Perspective,” *Old Paths Advocate* LXVII, no. 9 (September 1995): 2.

## NUMEROUS SO-CALLED PATTERNS

This reading seeks to analyze a number of so-called blueprints that have segregated/ghettoized Christians within the Churches of Christ into various belligerent camps. It appears, so it seems, that the problems within the Churches of Christ lie in determining what “pattern” is and what “pattern” is not the prescribed “heavenly mold.” Christians are divided over the pattern to follow during this one designated hour for worship in order to be acceptable to God. Many examples of the so-called worship models may be gleaned from the various Church of Christ journals and historical documents. None can agree as to what the “godly pattern” is. The following examples illustrate the utter helplessness of ever arriving at a correct understanding of the exact pattern to be followed by the faithful: (1) Upper-Room Pattern, (2) Flowing-Water Pattern, (3) Hymn-Singing and Going-Out Pattern, (4) Order-of-Worship Pattern, (5) Lord’s-Supper-Night Pattern, (6) Foot-Washing Pattern, (7) One-Cup Pattern, (8) Fermented-Wine Pattern or Grape-Juice Pattern, (9) One-Loaf Pattern, (10) Sitting-Down-Church-of-Christ pattern, (11) Non-Sunday-School Pattern, (12) Church-Organization Pattern, (13) Contribution Pattern, (14) A Capella Pattern, and (15) Holy-Kiss Pattern.

All Christians, to one extent or another, are influenced by *pattern theology*. As far back as January 1951, I was swayed by *pattern theology* for a so-called worship service performed with five acts carried out in a particular fashion. The biblical authority for such a pattern rested, as stated above, upon an odd interpretation (out of context) of Hebrews 8:5. This Scripture was relied upon to prove that God had ordained a particular pattern for the assembly on Sunday morning with its five items of worship. Then, John 4:24 was also cited to prove that these five acts were beyond a shadow of a doubt what Jesus had reference to when He spoke of worship that is “in spirit and in truth.” In other words, in order for worship to be “in spirit and in truth,” we must observe five rituals carried out in a certain manner between 11a.m. and 12 noon, or whatever time slot is assigned for the morning worship service.

One of the great oddities in all this pattern theology (practiced mainly among the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement) was/is that the Sunday morning collection could not be taken up any other time than between 11 a.m. and 12 noon, otherwise it was not according to the blueprint.<sup>10</sup> The following examination of the *oddities in pattern theology* will serve to

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<sup>10</sup> For an example of this kind of mentality—giving as one of the activities of worship—see Jim Franklin, “The collection for the Saints,” *Old Paths Advocate* LXVIII, no. 12 (December 1995); 6-7. Franklin writes:

“Lay by him in store. . .” There are some who have concluded that this has reference to making a store of a portion of their earnings at home, not in the assembly. This, I believe is not correct. . . . Paul deals with specific activities which [that] require congregational participation when they come together. He deals with the Lord’s Supper in chapters 10 and 11; singing, praying and teaching in chapter 14: and the collection in chapter 16. These activities constitute what we refer to as “items of worship” each assembly observes every Lord’s Day. . . . For members to keep their funds at home and then bring them to the congregation when Paul arrived is the very thing he opposed. The members were to make their contributions every first day of the week while they were assembled. . . . Paul responded with the procedure authorized by Heaven—commanding congregations everywhere to include ‘the collection’ as part of their responsibility during the worship upon the first day of the week.

illustrate the great harm that this ideology has perpetrated upon Christian unity. This teaching about five rituals as New Testament worship is one of the most divisive methods of interpretation ever thrust upon God's community. The following analysis of these oddities will serve to picture the absurd, foolish, and senseless positions advanced by many well-meaning Christians in their quest for oneness among God's people.

## AMUSING HABITS IN PATTERN THEOLOGY

### Upper-Room Pattern

The *Upper-Room Pattern* is quite comical to many Christians. But, nevertheless, in earlier years, it was not a laughing matter. It was supported with sincerity. Carl Ketcherside (1908-1989) relates the story of a brother, a graduate of one of the Christian colleges, who maintained that disciples of Jesus must observe the Lord's Supper in an upper room. This brother constructed a two-story building for the saints to break bread.<sup>11</sup> This believer's philosophy concerning the *upper-room* was based upon his concept of pattern theology. For his scriptural precedents, he read the account of Luke concerning the followers of Christ gathering in Jerusalem between the ascension of Christ and Pentecost:

When they arrived, they went **upstairs** to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. (Acts 1:13-14)

The KJV translates this verse, "And when they were come in, they went up into an **upper room**."<sup>12</sup> Whether we translate "upstairs" or "upper room," it is one and the same thing. This brother, as mentioned above, also perused Mark's account of the Last Supper in which Mark relates the events mentioned by the Master in preparation for the Passover: "He will show you a large **upper room**, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there" (Mark 14:15). And, finally, he read the account of Paul's assembling with the saints at Troas: "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the **upstairs room** where we were meeting" (Acts 20:7-8). Is the **upper room** a model for Christians to observe in their Sunday gatherings? Must believers meet in a two-story building today in order to observe the Lord's Supper? If not, why not?

I remember very vividly this concept of the **upper room** being discussed when I was about fifteen years old (1949). During my early days, while attending Montgomery Bible College, now called Faulkner University, this *upper-room pattern* was a subject talked about frequently by students and faculty. Even though the teachers associated with Montgomery Bible College did not agree, as far as I remember, with this hypothesis. Nevertheless, that opinion

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<sup>11</sup> Carl Ketcherside, "According to the Pattern," *Mission Messenger* 32 (February 1970): 17.

<sup>12</sup> *The King James Version*.

demonstrated that it was a concern of many devout Christians. They did not want to be guilty of false worship. The *Upper-Room Pattern* brethren wanted to worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). These misguided brethren wanted to do all things “according to the pattern” (Hebrews 8:5).<sup>13</sup>

Even though, today, we may not be as familiar with this idea of the *Upper Room theory* as we are with other *oddities in pattern theology*, nevertheless, this oddity in pattern theology is still alive and well on planet Earth. As late as 1985, a former professor of mine related to me an encounter that he had with a student attending Alabama Christian School of Religion (now, Amridge University) who advanced the notion of the *Upper-Room Pattern*. He said that that brother would not assemble on the first floor to break bread (observe the Lord’s Supper). In addition to this idiosyncratic idea or strange opinion, he also advanced the notion that the Lord’s Supper could be eaten only on Saturday night. This notion was also based upon Acts 20:7. This brother was so adamant about his belief that he offered to debate the issue. Why did he do this? Yes, he, too, desired to follow the so-called “New Testament pattern.” Many Christians, down through the centuries, have arrived at untold patterns—almost too numerous to count—in their pattern hermeneutics. If an event is recorded, then it is a pattern that Christians must observe. The next oddity in pattern theology is the *Flowing-Water Pattern*.

### **Flowing-Water Pattern**

Since culture changes from one generation to the next, the *Flowing Water Pattern* is not as prevalent, at least in the United States of America, as it once was. But at one time, many converts refused to be baptized in a man-made pool; they wanted only running water. During my earlier ministry—approximately sixty-eight years—I encountered those who did not believe in a baptistry, which today is just common practice—no hesitation against an in-door pool. These individuals insisted on what they called the *Flowing-Water Pattern*. Again, this judgment is still alive and well on planet Earth.

In Russia, for example, this opinion is prevalent among some individuals who respond to the Good News of God’s salvation made available by God “in” and “through” Jesus His Anointed One.<sup>14</sup> Their notion is to follow the prototype of those who were baptized in the New Testament. This conviction is in part based upon the concept of *pattern theology*. To illustrate this concern to be true to the biblical pattern, these believers rely upon Jesus’ baptism by John: “Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John” (Matthew 3:13). Again, John the Baptist is also relied upon in making their judgment about the *Flowing-Water Pattern*:

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<sup>13</sup> This judgment is not intended to question the sincere motives of those individuals who wanted to please God. There is a distinction between rebellion against God’s written Revelation and an honest mistake of the intellect/heart.

<sup>14</sup> This scenario was related to me by a missionary to Russia. If this flowing-water pattern is still practiced, I have no way of knowing. I have many friends who are missionaries to Russia, and I do not remember the one who related this story. Recently, I received an email from a brother (one cup and Sunday school) who informed me that he was a member of the “**true**” Church of Christ. His particular fellowship stressed the **flowing-water pattern**. The one-cup Churches of Christ, as a whole, do not practice this particular pattern.

“Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized” (John 3:23).

As a result of the *Flowing-Water Pattern theology*, many sincere believers often ask questions: Was Jesus baptized in a box? Or was He baptized in flowing water? Which? Carl Ketcherside, author and lecturer, also relates an incident in which a sister objected to the construction of a baptistry under the pulpit.<sup>15</sup> He writes:

The aged sister was more adamant than any of the others, I can recall her saying, “There’s just as much scripture for an organ on top of the pulpit as for one of them things under it. The day they put it in they can put me out. There’s no pattern for it. The Lord was baptized in a river and I don’t want to see any one baptized in a box.”<sup>16</sup>

The next oddity in pattern theology is the *Hymn-Singing and Going-out Pattern*. This pattern also illustrates the bizarre lengths that Christians go to in order to be faithful to the Word of God within their concept of “according to the pattern.”

### **Hymn-Singing and Going-out Pattern**

There is the *Hymn-Singing and Going-out Pattern* following the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. To illustrate this once upon a time strange practice, Carl Ketcherside is called upon to unveil an incident that happened in his father’s ministry. He describes an episode that occurred on the Lord’s Day during one of his father’s preaching engagements. His father had inquired as to the customary time he should approach the pulpit. He was informed that he would preach after the Lord’s Supper. Following the Supper, his father arose to approach the pulpit and observed that the congregation walked out and, then, came back in. Afterwards, he was informed that their actions were “according to the pattern.”

Well, we might wonder what authority there is for such a pattern. Is this biblical? Yes, Matthew informs his readers that following the Lord’s Supper, “When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (Matthew 26:30). Ketcherside says that his father did not have the nerve to tell them that “they went out to the Mount of Olives.”<sup>17</sup> What is *the pattern* for Christians to follow? For many believers, this inquiry is still the sixty-four thousand-dollar question. Every group has its own unique pattern that it seeks to bind upon other believers in order for them to participate within their own Christian fellowship.

**Every fellowship is orthodox unto itself.** Every fellowship has its own hand-me-down patterns. Every fellowship is its own interpretative community of God’s Word. For one not to

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<sup>15</sup> One of the first congregations (Murphy Ave. Church of Christ, LaGrange, GA) that this author labored with (1951) had a baptistry under the pulpit. Even though this congregation was/is a strict patternist in its theology—one cup, non-Sunday school, grape juice only, bread pinchers, head coverings for women in the assembly, a capella singing, and so on—nevertheless, this congregation did not practice the *Flowing-Water Pattern*. One cannot help but wonder why they did not advance this notion.

<sup>16</sup> Ketcherside, “According to the Pattern,” Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



submit to one's particular pattern is to be caught in the very jaws of hell itself,<sup>18</sup> but to whom does one submit his thinking? Every congregation claims to speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent. The next weirdness in pattern theology that this paper addresses is the *Order-of-Worship Pattern*.<sup>19</sup>

### Order-of-Worship Pattern

Among the Churches of Christ, the *Order-of-Worship Pattern* is not very well known, neither is it wide spread among the one-cup and non-Sunday school congregations. In the late fifties, I worked with two congregations in South Alabama—Lowery and Early Town. One of these congregations practiced what is known as the *Order-of-Worship Pattern*, supposedly founded on Acts 2:42. According to this group, Luke sets forth a pattern to be observed when the saints come together on Sunday morning for a worship service with its required rituals. This particular philosophy also requires that the rituals be performed in a certain chronological order based upon the reading in Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

J.D. Phillips (1904-1981), as far as I recall, introduced this perception of an order pattern, into the Lowery church.<sup>20</sup> This brother was also associated with believers who advocated the *One-Cup Pattern* in the observance of the Lord's Supper and the *Non-Sunday School Pattern*. If we read the context of Acts 2:42 very carefully, it is obvious, at least to me, that Phillips misunderstood this passage as well as the controversy over individual communion cups and Sunday school. Nevertheless, in spite of his misunderstanding of so many issues, he still followed the ultimate pattern, namely, Jesus the Messiah who is the Savior who came to rescue sinful humanity. **One should never slander or speak evil of this man of God, even though he misunderstood so many things—especially prophecy.** He exemplified Christ in every area of his life. It could be said of him—he loved God. I still thank God that He allowed me to have an opportunity to know such a godly saint.

The Lowery Church of Christ (Lowery, AL) adopted this *Order-of-Worship Pattern* as presented to them by Phillips. This unusual interpretation advances the notion that the sequence of the five acts of worship must be performed in the sequence revealed in Acts 2:42. Phillips wrote a tract called “The Ancient Order of Christian Worship” to defend what he considered the

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<sup>18</sup> Several year ago, a brother in Christ, a first cousin of mine (Raymond Miller—1932-2010), informed me that when he explained the Word of God to anyone, then they were without excuse for their ignorance. Raymond belonged to the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement—a movement that is still (2019) hopelessly divided into various warring factions. He was a devout and faithful servant of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, like me, came under the influence of his father and my uncle (E. H. Miller—1909-1989). This misunderstanding of both Raymond and his father was not rebellion against God, but rather a sincere misunderstanding of the Scriptures. I believe that both men are now with the Lord.

<sup>19</sup> I never cease to be amazed at the countless so-called patterns that God's people find in the Scriptures.

<sup>20</sup> I knew and heard J. D. Phillips preach several times. In my judgment, he was one of the greatest men that I have ever known. I believe that he walked as close to God as any man that I have ever known. Even though, in my judgment, he held to some rather strange ideas; nevertheless, I still had the utmost respect for him as a man of sincerity and a man who truly loved God.

biblical pattern. In this pamphlet he called attention to four things: (1) the apostles' teaching, (2) the fellowship, (3) the breaking of bread, and (4) to prayer.

This congregation in South Alabama did not allow prayers until the end of the Lord's Supper. Also, the congregation could not break bread (number 3) before passing the basket for the "fellowship" (number 2), which was/is interpreted as the contribution. Also, this congregation would not permit prayers until the three of the above acts were carried out. The invitation song also had to be extended before the assembly was called together.<sup>21</sup> This order was not the order observed when I first worked with the Lowery congregation.

**In calling attention to this concept of patternism, it is not my intent to attack the godly motives of so many people who wanted to serve God faithfully to the best of their ability.** Yet, in spite of this odd practice, they were (and still are) a people devoted to God. In addition to the *Order-of-Worship Pattern*, this fellowship of Christians also practices the *One-Cup Pattern* and the *Non-Sunday-School Pattern* and the *Grape-Juice Pattern* and the *Bread-Pinching Pattern*. This study is not designed to discuss the correctness or wrongness of their positions. Still there is a great deal to be desired in their hermeneutics, especially these four so-called patterns in Acts 2:42.

This strife over the *Order-of-Worship Pattern* did not originate with Phillips. This belief predates Phillips<sup>22</sup> by 102 years. For example, in 1836—approximately 102 years before Phillips published his book on the Order of Worship (1938)—Francis Whitefield Emmons, a contemporary of Alexander Campbell (1788-1866), took the position that the exercises of public worship are to be attended to according to the pattern set forth by Luke in Acts 2:42, that is to say, their order as respects time, priority, or sequence as prescribed by divine authority. Robert Richardson (1806-1876, American medical doctor and physician to Thomas and Alexander Campbell) took issue with Emmons. Richardson wrote: "The order of the words in Acts 2:42 does not necessarily denote the order of the exercises."<sup>23</sup> Is there an *Order of Worship Pattern*?

This concept of the *Order-of-Worship Pattern* did not die out with Richardson's refutation. Later, this conflict appeared again in 1897. Ketcherside calls attention to the dispute that surfaced again. He observes:

Sixty years later the controversy was revived by publication of a tract on December 1, 1897, under the heading, "The Worship." So heated did the discussion become that one participant wrote, "That there has been haste on both sides of this unholy war is not a question. This is to be regretted and repented of. Unfair methods have been employed. Men, regardless of character have been justified; and men, without regard to character, convictions or conscience, have been condemned." He ended with a challenge to debate.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This practice was carried out with a good conscience. Why? Well, the time for worship had not begun. Once this invitation was over, then the leader announced that worship was about to begin—same people, same place, and same time, but the announcement made the difference. This is the same philosophy as the popular dismissal prayer. Once the prayer is said, then women as well as men may talk.

<sup>22</sup> Consult J. D. Phillips (1904-1981), *The Ancient Order of Christian Worship* (Texas: J. D. Phillips, 1938).

<sup>23</sup> Robert Richardson, "Review," *Millennial Harbinger* 7 (May 1836): 276. See also *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>24</sup> Ketcherside, "According to the Pattern," 17-18.

## Lord's-Supper-Night Pattern

The oddities in *pattern theology* have dominated the thinking of the Stone/Campbell Reformation Movement almost since its inception. As time progressed, more and more Christians began to see binding patterns on almost every page of the New Testament. One such oddity turned its attention toward the question of the proper time for the observance of the Lord's Supper. Should we observe the Supper during the "day light hours" or during the "night hours"? Ketcherside, in dealing with this issue of time, writes that a well-known brother reached the conclusion that the supper could not be observed at "dinner time." It could only be commemorated at night. The brother continued, "History shows it was kept at night in the first centuries and never in daylight."<sup>25</sup> Then the writer continued to stress his point:

I think you will conclude with me that the evidence for the Supper at night is as clear as for the first day of the week. Those who contend for a restoration of New Testament Christianity will not ignore the argument for long without drifting to the common ground of indifference to the whole matter. It comes with poor grace to contend for loyalty to one example, and ignore the other. But Paul says, 'Ye have us for an example,' Phil. 3:17."<sup>26</sup>

Ketcherside (1908-1989) also wrote that he received letters from two sisters in Texas who informed him that they had to leave "the daylight worshipers" in order to follow the apostolic pattern. They requested that he insist that everyone "come out from among them and be separate."<sup>27</sup> What did these two sisters base their *pattern theology* on? They cited Matthew, Mark, and Luke to demonstrate that the meal occurred at night. For example, Matthew reveals: "When evening ( $\acute{\omicron}\psi\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ , *opsias*) came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me" (Matthew 26:20-21). Mark also discloses that the meal occurred during the evening: "When evening ( $\acute{\omicron}\psi\acute{\iota}\alpha\varsigma$ , *opsias*) came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me" (Mark 14:17-18). Luke pens the following:

On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. "Don't be alarmed," he said. "He's alive!" Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. (Acts 20:7-11)

Not only do some Christians advance the *Night Pattern*, but others, as mentioned above under the caption *Upper-Room- Pattern*, also support the notion that it must be partaken in an

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

upper room. As stated earlier, a former professor of mine, Lawrence Barclay, related an event that occurred while he was teaching on the faculty of Faulkner University (1985) concerning an individual who would not meet on the first floor to “break bread” or to observe the Lord’s Supper except on Saturday night (after 6 pm). Barclay also related to me that this individual offered to debate the *upper room pattern*. As we casually read Luke’s account of Paul’s gathering with the saints, we quickly notice that the disciples met in an upper room—“third story.”

### Foot-Washing Pattern

The *Foot-Washing Pattern* has never taken hold within the Churches of Christ. Nevertheless, this concept did gain some influence among some Christians within this Movement. Although this concept of foot washing did not gain much notoriety, still other groups outside the Churches of Christ did take up the cause to follow the example of Christ. Some believers outside of the Stone/Campbell Movement still practice foot washing as a part of the divine pattern.<sup>28</sup> Even though the practice of foot washing is an oddity within the Churches of Christ, Ketcherside writes about “two small groups in the mountain regions who declared a state of nonfellowship with the congregations around them who refuse to practice ‘washing of feet’ as proof of loyalty to the commands of Jesus.”<sup>29</sup>

Even if this belief in the *Foot-Washing Pattern* is an oddity to many Christians today, nevertheless, for many Christians, nothing could be plainer than the command of Jesus:

Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. **I have set you an example** that **you should do as I have done** for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, **you will be blessed if you do them.** (John 13:14-17)

What about the command to wash “one another’s feet”? Is there a biblical pattern for foot-washing today? How do we determine what is or what is not a pattern to be followed by God’s people in this century? For some strange reason, this pattern never took hold among the Churches of Christ.

### One-Cup Pattern

The *One-Cup Pattern* is still alive and grounded upon planet earth. Many Christians still maintain that the biblical pattern for the Lord’s Supper is the use of one container in the distribution of the grape juice in the communion. This fellowship objects to the use of multiple cups (containers) in the observance of the Lord’s Supper. This particular fellowship is often referred to in derision as the “one cuppers.” The chief objection of the Christians who employ the common cup in the Lord’s Supper is that those who do not use the single cup are not

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<sup>28</sup> See J. D. Douglas, ed., *New 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1991), s.v. “Footwashing,” by Melvin E. Dieter.

<sup>29</sup> Ketcherside, “According to the Pattern,” 18.

following the divine pattern.<sup>30</sup> Debates have been numerous, and still continue to this day, over this issue of the use of the one-cup in the distribution of the fruit of the vine in the weekly communion.<sup>31</sup> One group insists that the “cup” is a literal container and the other party contends that the “cup” is the fruit of the vine. The late E. H. Miller (1909-1989, my uncle) wrote:

In the history of individual communion cups you see they were not invented until 1894, and were first used in Ohio; not at Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3). I have a letter from the grandson of the Rev. J. G. Thomas, referred to in this history as the inventor of the individual communion cups, and he tells me, “Grandfather, John G. Thomas, who was both a physician and a minister, invented the first individual communion outfits. The first patents were issued to him in 1894. The Market St. Presbyterian Church of Lima, Ohio, is believed to be the first church to ever use individual communion cups in a communion service. This also occurred in 1894. What is believed to be the original individual communion service used by this church is on display in the Allen County Historical Museum in Lima, Ohio.” So friends, if you use individual communion cups, don’t bite the hand that feeds you! No, don’t condemn other churches for not doing Bible things the Bible way, and then go thou and do likewise.<sup>32</sup>

We can readily follow the thought-pattern of Miller in refusing the use of individual communion cups as not adhering to the so-called “divine pattern.” Miller correctly, at least on surface reasoning, calls attention to the introduction of the small, individual communion cups as being an innovation that did not exist prior to 1894. If the individual cups introduced by this Presbyterian preacher did not exist in the first century, then one must surmise that Christians who employ the use of more than one container in the distribution of the fruit of the vine has forsaken the divine pattern in the Lord’s Supper. The use of one container for the distribution of the fruit of the vine is just one aspect of this strange movement. One that is equally uncanny is the insistence upon the cup having handles—no handles on the cup indicates that it is not a cup.

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<sup>30</sup> See Ronny F. Wade, “Looking Back to the Future,” *Old Paths Advocate* LXVII, no. 1 (January 1995): 1, where Wade says,

This journal was started by Brother H. C. Harper [1874-1936] in 1928. At that time the controversy over individual cups in the communion was still rather young. The introduction of the Sunday school was still a problem of great concern. Every month, the columns of this paper were filled with articles opposing these and all other innovations. Debates were common and those guilty of fostering changes in the divine pattern were called into question time and again by various writers.

<sup>31</sup> For example, consult Lynwood Smith, ed., *Porter-Waters Debate* (Mississippi: Lynwood Smith, 1952); also refer to E. H. Miller, *Proof: Cups and Classes Are Not Scriptural* (LaGrange, GA: E. H. Miller, nd); E. H. Miller, ed. “*The Cup of the Lord*,” *What Is It?: A Friendly Discussion Between E. H. Miller and M. L. Lemley* (LaGrange, GA: E. H. Miller, nd); for other debates, see Wade-Cox debate, November 18-19, 1994, Wedowee, AL; also, Battey—Thraser—Donahue debate, June 23-24, 1994, Mableton, GA; again, Bailey-Donahue, April 13-14, 1995. Lynwood Smith (1924-2007)

<sup>32</sup> Miller, *Proofs: Cups and Classes Are Not Scriptural*, 43.

## One-Cup-Handle Pattern

As just stated, another curious concept that originated within the *One-Cup Pattern* was the *One-Cup-Handle Pattern*. As a young preacher boy (in the 50s), I recall arguments, within the one-cup Movement, over the use of a glass versus the use of a cup. Within this particular fellowship, Christians argued over whether the cup had to have a handle or not. What is the divine pattern? No one really knew for sure! Ketcherside tells about two congregations that he was acquainted with that would *not* employ a glass or goblet, but insisted upon using a cup with a handle. He writes: “In the community about them they are designated as the ‘One Cup with a Handle Church of Christ.’”<sup>33</sup> This was serious business. No one must go away from the sacred pattern—whatever that was.

Those believers who adopted the *one-cup with a handle* were the conservatives, according to their understanding of the Scriptures, but, on the other hand, the *glass or goblet groups* were the liberals or digressives. The term *digressive* is still employed by many well-meaning Christians of the one-cup belief to castigate those of a different persuasion, that is to say, those who participate in the use of multiple containers, Sunday school, instrumental music, and so on.<sup>34</sup> *The pattern* is their motto! But this name calling and legalistic mindset is not limited to the one-cup faction, for this same attitude of the one-cup fellowship is utilized by almost every classification of the Stone/Campbell Movement against those who do not assent to an exclusive opinion advanced by the so-called orthodox defenders of the faith.

Is there a definite or unequivocal pattern in the so-called worship service with its five acts? This question still haunts many Christians. What is the pattern? Patterns abound throughout the Churches of Christ. There is almost a new pattern on every street corner. One such outlandish pattern is found among Christians who will not extend the right hand of fellowship to individuals who employ wine in the Lord’s Supper. Neither group can agree upon

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<sup>33</sup> Ketcherside, “According to the Pattern,” 18.

<sup>34</sup> This author received a response from Alton Bailey (1932-2014, first cousin of mine—preacher in the one-cup Movement) concerning a letter (email) that I had written him about David Caughman, who ministered for the one-cup church in Montgomery, AL. (Vonora Ave. Church of Christ), in which he refers to me as a liberal and digressive. See Alton’s email letter, “Alton Bailey to Dallas Burdette,” (4 October 1999, 10:01 p.m.), he writes:

You asked if I had any objections to David Caughman associating with you on a personal level. Dallas, David is quite a grown up man and does not need me to tell him who he can or cannot associate with. That is up to him. I personally do not believe it would be of any advantage to him or the Lord’s work he is striving to accomplish for [the] church there in Montgomery to do so. I believe you would constantly be trying to teach him to turn from the Lord’s original way and to except (sic—accept) the **far out liberal views for which you have contended for several years**. I have not known David very long; however, I think of him as being honest, strict and sincere when it comes to digression and liberalism. **I do not know why he would want to spend his time with any liberal who tries to destroy what Jesus and the apostles taught**. Again, that is his business not mine. (Emphasis mine—bold)

the exact pattern—*grape juice or wine*. The grape-juice faction will not fellowship the wine-only faction and the wine-only party will not fellowship the grape-juice faction.

## **Fermented-Wine Pattern Versus Grape-Juice Pattern**

Several small groups within the Churches of Christ have reached the conclusion that the pattern calls for *fermented wine* in the Lord's Supper. On the other hand, there are other believers who advance the notion that the pattern calls for *grape juice* only, not wine, in the observance of the communion. I am acquainted with Christians who will not use grape juice in the communion. These wine only Christians, as a whole, have separated themselves from the grape juice only saints, and the grape juice only advocates will not tolerate the wine only supporters.

For a classic example of the grape juice only fellowship mentality, we need only consult E. H. Miller, an uncle of mine,<sup>35</sup> who wrote against the fermented wine churches as not following the biblical pattern. For Miller, the *fermented wine* users were not speaking where the Bible speaks and were not silent where the Bible was silent. As a result of this belief over the so-called divine pattern, then fellowship could not exist between the two groups. Miller wrote in defense of the use of *grape juice only*: “Let us use one loaf which is Christ's body; and one cup which is the one new testament (Jer. 31:31 and Heb. 8:6-9 and 10:9-29). And the product of the vine (grape juice produced by the vine), new wine found in the cluster.”<sup>36</sup> Miller argues that since no vine ever produced fermented wine, then one can only conclude that the expression, fruit of the vine, can only have reference to the pure grape juice (unfermented) that the vine produced. This kind of reasoning sounds logical, but this rationalization does not tell the whole story.

If only grape juice was employed by the early disciples, one cannot help but wonder what Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians: “When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk” (1 Corinthians 11:20-21). We must assume that it would be very difficult to get “drunk” on grape juice only. On the other hand, if the early disciples only had a sip, as is commonly practiced within the Churches of Christ, we also wonder how they got drunk even with wine. The early disciples met around a table, not a pulpit. Joachim Jeremias (1900-1979), an outstanding biblical scholar, calls attention to the use of wine in the

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<sup>35</sup> I am not seeking to castigate my uncle by mentioning his name; but since he wrote books and conducted debates about these issues, I cite his writings to illustrate the beliefs he advocated concerning his divisive spirit over many issues—especially individual communion cups, wine in the Lord's Supper, and Sunday school. I still owe a great deal of gratitude to my uncle for instilling into my heart a belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures. It is my firm conviction that Miller is now in heaven with God our Father, our Lord Jesus, and our Holy Spirit. He was one of the most faithful, God fearing men that I have ever known. His whole life was devoted to the service of God.

<sup>36</sup> Miller, *Proof: Cups and Classes Are Not Scriptural*, 46.

Passover observance during the time of Christ.<sup>37</sup> In spite of the evidence concerning the use of wine in the original Passover, nevertheless, many still advocate the *Grape Juice Only Pattern*. Christians go to great lengths to find patterns that God has not ordained as patterns. Another bizarre pattern is the *Bread-Pinching Pattern* from one loaf. Strange as this may sound to many ears, nevertheless the church of the Messiah is divided into the bread-breaking party and the bread-pinching party.

### One-Loaf and Bread-Pinching Pattern

Another so-called pattern within the Churches of Christ is the *One Loaf and Bread Pinching Pattern*. Christians have divided over a method of breaking the bread. This philosophy of bread breaking is stressed to the point of refusing fellowship with other believers if other believers refuse to succumb to *bread pinching pattern* rather than to the *bread breaking pattern*. The one-cup patternist primarily advances this odd behavior. The one-cup fellowship insists, even to this day (November, 2019), that the one who presides at the Lord's Table must "*pinch*" a piece from the one loaf and then eat. This procedure of bread pinching is followed in order that the loaf may remain one piece as the bread is passed to other communicants, which allows each person to pinch off a portion of the bread from an unbroken loaf. E. H. Miller, who was one of the foremost debaters within this particular fellowship, wrote:

The question now comes: "How are we to break this one loaf?" "Jesus took bread (a loaf), and blessed, and break [broke] it, and gave unto them saying—This do" (Mt 26:26, Mk 14:22, and Lk. 22:19). Here are two brethren we'll say who are divided over breaking the loaf, they find that John is to serve at the Lord's table next Lord's Day, so one goes to John and says, "Now, I want you to follow the example of Jesus next Lord's Day; first, I want you to take the loaf (as Jesus did) before thanks is offered; second, I want you to give thanks and not call on someone else, then I want you to break the loaf before you give it to the others, Jesus did, and said 'This do'. So, I want you to follow His example; Yes, 'This do' as he commanded." Well, John has not studied very much on this question; hence he agrees to do so in order not to offend his brother; but Bro. Jerry hearing of this goes to John and says, "Now, I'm willing for you to take the loaf before thanks is offered, I'm willing for you then to give thanks, doing that will not offend anyone, but brother, if you break that loaf half in two before giving it to others as Bro. Jim has been doing, I can't eat, [and] you will offend me, for my Lord's body was never broken half in two". Bro. John is now at a loss, what to do. If he does not break the bread before passing it, he will offend Bro. Jim, and if he breaks it half in two he will offend Bro. Jerry. He begins to study, how can I avoid offending? He read again Mt. 26:26, Mk. 14:22, and Lk. 22:19. Yes, Jesus brake the bread and said, "This do". . . .<sup>38</sup>

The argument of Miller is that the breaking of the loaf must be done according to the *pattern*. In other words, one must "*pinch*" a tiny piece of the bread off the one loaf, not break the bread into halves or multiple pieces. Again, what is the pattern? Do you agree with Miller or disagree? If you dissent, why do you object? Is there a specific pattern to be observed in the

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<sup>37</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (Scribner's Sons: New York, 1966), 52-53.

<sup>38</sup> Miller, *Proof: Cups and Classes Are Not Scriptural*, 26.



sharing of the bread among the participants? Do you abide by the *One-Loaf Pattern*? If one thinks this is odd, then observe the next pattern—*The Sitting-Down-Church-of-Christ Pattern*.

### Sitting-Down Pattern

Within the one-cup and non-Sunday school Movement, there originated a group of believers that advocated that a chair be placed next to the Lord's Table.<sup>39</sup> This fellowship declared that in order for one to be true to the Scriptures, one must *sit* when he breaks bread or drinks from the common cup. Why? Well, the Scriptures are explicit in this philosophy of sitting down while partaking of the Lord's Supper. Do not the Scriptures state: "Now when the even was come, he sat down (ἀνέκειτο, *anekeito*, "to recline")<sup>40</sup> with the twelve. And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me" (Matthew 26:20-21).<sup>41</sup> Mark also says, "And in the evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat (ἀνακειμένων, *anakeimenōn*, "to recline")<sup>42</sup> and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me" (Mark 14:17-18).<sup>43</sup> Luke reports the same event: "And when the hour was come, he sat down (ἀνέπεσεν, *anepesen*, "to fall back")<sup>44</sup> and the twelve apostles with him" (Luke 22:14).<sup>45</sup> In the reading of the KJV, we are left with the impression that Jesus and the apostles sat around a table as is generally done today. But a look at the Greek text reveals that they were reclining around the table, not sitting. The NIV correctly translates these verses in the following manner:

When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." (Matthew 26:20-21)

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." (Mark 14:17-18)

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. (Luke 22:14-15)

This *Sitting-Down Pattern* is another example of seeking a pattern where God has not set forth a pattern. This is a classic case in point of the extremes that Christians go to in order to find a

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<sup>39</sup> Raymond Miller (1932-2010), a first cousin of mine, the son of the late E. H. Miller, my uncle, described this story to me. Raymond said that as a young boy, he attended this congregation during one of his father's Gospel meetings. At the time Raymond told me about this event, he could not remember the congregation's geographical location nor the current status of this fellowship. At that time, he did not know if this body of believers still continued to adhere to this oddity in pattern theology.

<sup>40</sup> Matthew employs a third person, singular, imperfect, middle, indicative—from ἀνέκειτο, *anekeito*, "to recline."

<sup>41</sup> *The King James Version*9.

<sup>42</sup> Mark employs a present, middle, participle, masculine, plural, genitive—from ἀνακειμένων, *anakeimenōn*, "to recline."

<sup>43</sup> *The King James Version*.

<sup>44</sup> Luke uses a third person, singular, aorist, active, indicative—from ἀνέπεσεν, *anepesen*.

<sup>45</sup> *The King James Version*.

pattern for each detail in a so-called worship service. Another pattern that is rather bizarre is the *Non-Sunday-School Pattern*.

### **Non-Sunday-School Pattern**

Christians can and do find patterns for their particular brand of orthodoxy. To the surprise of many, no doubt, there is the *Non-Sunday-School Pattern*. The right to teach classes has been challenged and discussed with intensity—even with resultant partisan bitterness.<sup>46</sup> The right to teach classes has been challenged and discussed by the late E. H. Miller, who was one of the foremost debaters in the one-cup and non-Sunday school movement.<sup>47</sup> For Miller and others in this movement, the participation in Bible study, or Sunday school studies, on Sunday morning is a violation of the divine pattern set forth in Hebrews 8:5. We are hard pressed, so it is argued within this strange fellowship, to find a pattern in the New Testament for Sunday school. Miller drives home this point when he writes:

From the “American Reference Library,” Volume 6, Page 2793, “Sunday schools, schools usually organized in churches for the purpose of Bible study. The origin of these schools is due to Robert Raikes of Gloucester, England. The first Sunday school in America was opened in Philadelphia, in 1790.” On page 2395, same volume, we read, “Raikes, Rakes, Robert, (1735-1811), the father of Sunday Schools.”<sup>48</sup>

The question proposed by this particular fellowship is: Is there a New Testament pattern (book, chapter, and verse) for the modern day Sunday school? Since one cannot read of Sunday schools in the New Testament, then individuals who participate in this practice are not following the “divine pattern” set forth by God in His word. Pattern theology never seems to run out of patterns. Another pattern is the *Church-Organization Pattern*. Again, this philosophy is based upon faulty interpretations—even though in sincerity.

### **Church-Organization Pattern**

The non-instrumental Churches of Christ have divided over the organization of charitable institutions. Churches that supported/support the Herald of Truth programs for the purpose of promoting the Gospel were criticized for not adhering to the “godly mold.” Christian colleges were/are condemned for doing the work of the church, so it is argued by many well-meaning

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<sup>46</sup> Consult the following sources: L. W. Hayhurst and Logan Buchanan versus Alva Johnson and Van Bonneau, *Debate on the Bible Class Question* (Texas: J. R. Chisholm and Jimmy Wood, 1950); also read J. P. Watson and O. H. Tallman, *A Written Discussion on the Sunday School Class Question* (Tenn.: J. P. Watson, 1931); see also E. H. Miller, *Proof: Cups and Classes Are Not Scriptural* (LaGrange, GA: E. H. Miller, nd). Also consult the *Porter-Waters Debate*.

<sup>47</sup> See Miller, *Proof: Cups and Classes Are Not Scriptural*, for a detailed analysis of the arguments against the employment of individual communion cups and Sunday school.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Christians. The main argument against church supported schools and benevolent organizations are based upon this complex, or convoluted, rationalization of so-called blueprint theology.

During the month of November (18<sup>th</sup>—23<sup>rd</sup>) 1957, Roy E. Cogdill (1907-1985) and Guy N. Woods (1908-1993) conducted a debate<sup>49</sup> over “benevolent organizations for the care of the needy, such as Boles Home, Tipton Home, Tennessee Orphan Home, Childhaven, and other Orphan Homes for the Aged that are among us.”<sup>50</sup> Woods defended the benevolent organizations, but Cogdill repudiated such institutions as unscriptural, that is to say, these innovations were not according to the biblical outline. The question is, Can something be unscriptural and not antiscritural at the same time? Does there have to be a detailed model for every minute detail in kingdom work? If so, one wonders where it will end. Who is right in his/her concept of what the heavenly mold is? Who is wrong in his or her perception of what the celestial copy ought not to be? What is the divine pattern? Is there a restricted design for a so-called worship service with its five acts to be executed on Sunday morning in a prearranged way?<sup>51</sup> Another so-called celestial pattern is the *Contribution Pattern*. Some Christians have gone so far as to advance the notion that it is sinful to collect money except on Sunday morning during the worship service.

### **Contribution-for-Believers-Only Pattern**

Congregations have divided over the distribution of monies collected during the worship service. This sacred money, according to many believers, cannot be utilized to assist anyone except members of the Church of Christ. In other words, there is no New Testament pattern for assisting non-members out of the church treasury. In order to try to settle the issue, debates were conducted to get individuals back in line with the mindset of the churches that objected to giving assistance to people who were not members of the Church of Christ. Even today, debates are still conducted over this *Contribution Pattern*.

Again, Guy N. Woods and Roy Cogdill, in addition to benevolent organizations listed above, debated the authority for “churches of Christ to contribute funds from their treasuries in support of the Herald of Truth Radio Program, conducted by the Highland Church of Christ, Abilene, Texas, as a means of cooperating in accomplishing the mission of the Church of the Lord.”<sup>52</sup> Once more, in January 1968, the Arlington Meeting took place with twenty-six speakers to define biblical authority for their practices, that is to say, for their benevolent organizations and contributions from their church treasuries toward the Herald of Truth.<sup>53</sup> This debate centered on the so-called blueprint supposedly put together by God for the Church.

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<sup>49</sup> Guy N. Woods and Roy E. Cogdill, *The Cogdill-Woods Debate* (Indiana: The Cogdill Foundation, 1976). This debate took place in 1957 in Birmingham, Alabama.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>51</sup> The issue of controversy is not that there is not a pattern taught in the New Testament for Christian living, but rather, is there a detailed blueprint to be observed on Sunday morning when Christians come together to encourage and to strengthen one another in the faith?

<sup>52</sup> Woods, *The Cogdill-Woods Debate*, *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Cecil Willis, ed., *The Arlington Meeting*, 2nd ed., (Indiana: Cogdill Foundation, 1976).

## Sunday-Only-Contribution Pattern

Another oddity concerning the Sunday morning collection is still prevalent among the one-cup and non-Sunday school fellowship is the *Sunday-Contribution Pattern*. In the early fifties, this author remembers very vividly the emphasis placed on the correctness of passing the collection basket only on Sunday mornings. For one to pass the collection plate around during a Gospel meeting would be sinful. Why? Well, this practice would violate the “divine pattern” set forth by Paul to the Corinthians. This body of believers<sup>54</sup> called forth Paul’s admonition to the Corinthians to justify this strange behavior:

Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

This passage of Scripture is still relied upon by almost all one-cup and non-Sunday school Churches of Christ to give approval for a weekly collection on Sunday morning as one of the acts of worship, even though Paul says, “when I come no collections will have to be made.”

## A Capella Pattern

Many believers refuse fellowship with other Christians who employ the use of the instrument in praise to God in the assembly for the Sunday morning worship or Sunday evening worship. Controversies rage over the custom of the instrument. This disagreement is so strong that the non-instrument Christians do not believe that the instrument users are Christians. In fact, many Christians still maintain that God will send one to hell for praising Him with instruments of music. The quarrel boils down to this: What is the pattern? In November 1903, J. Carroll Stark (affirms) and Joe S. Warlick (denies) conducted a debate in Henderson, Tennessee over the use of the instrument in a worship service.<sup>55</sup>

Another debate that received widespread attention was the debate between Alan E. Highers and Given O. Blakely.<sup>56</sup> In this debate, Blakely discussed the so-called worship service and questioned Highers about Scripture citations for a worship service. Blakely argued, correctly in my view, that God had not ordained five acts to be performed on Sunday morning in a prescribed manner. In other words, for Blakely, if God has not ordained a worship service

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<sup>54</sup> Approximately twenty-two years ago (1997/1998), while visiting either the Early Town Church of Christ or the Lowery Church of Christ (these two congregations are about three miles apart), I picked up a brochure advertising a Gospel meeting. In this brochure, the congregation stressed the collection for Sunday morning only.

<sup>55</sup> J. Carroll Stark and Joe S. Warlick, *A Debate between J. Carroll Stark and Joe S. Warlick* (Tennessee: Gospel Advocate, nd).

<sup>56</sup> See Alan E. Highers, ed., *The Highers-Blakely Debate on Instrumental Music in Worship* (Texas: Valid Publications, 1988). I attended this debate and had the opportunity to meet Dwaine Dunning who debated Rubel Shelly (Shelly—Dunning Debate—1977) in which Dunning sets forth arguments against the so-called five acts of worship.

with five acts, then if one praises God with the instrument or without the instrument no pattern is violated since God has not legislated one way or the other. Perhaps, one of the strangest of all the so-called divine patterns within the Stone/Campbell Movement centered on *the Holy Kiss Pattern* in the eighteen hundreds.

### **Holy-Kiss Pattern**

In the early part of the Stone/Campbell Movement, many Christians practiced the *Holy-Kiss Pattern*.<sup>57</sup> This concept of the *Holy Kiss Pattern* was based, at least in part, upon the slogan, “We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent.” To illustrate this mindset, one calls to the front the words of Paul to the saints in Rome: “Greet one another with **a holy kiss**. All the churches of Christ send greetings” (Romans 16:16). Again, to the Corinthians, Paul also wrote: “All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with **a holy kiss**” (1 Corinthians 16:20). Also, in his second letter to Corinth, he, once more, encourages the holy kiss: “Greet one another with **a holy kiss**. All the saints send their greetings” (2 Corinthians 13:12-13). But this is not all. Paul also instructed the Christians at Thessalonica to practice the holy kiss: “Greet all the brothers with **a holy kiss**. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers” (1 Thessalonians 5:26-27). Paul is not the only one who encouraged the holy kiss. Even Peter in his first epistle also promoted the same: “Greet one another with **a kiss of love**. Peace to all of you who are in Christ” (1 Peter 5:14).

Even Alexander Campbell calls attention to the controversy surrounding the holy kiss: “It is argued that it is five times positively commanded in the epistles written to the congregations set in order by the Apostles.”<sup>58</sup> Campbell objected to the practice as a *pattern* for the Christian community. Even though many believers accepted this concept of the holy kiss as a positive command from the Scriptures, nevertheless, he believed it to be entirely unauthorized by any “hint, allusion, or command in the apostolic writings.”<sup>59</sup> Again, one must ask: Is this holy kiss a part of the divine pattern that is to be practiced until Jesus returns? In 1992, three missionaries related to me that the holy kiss is a common practice among Christians in Russia. One of these missionaries described the holy kiss as a kiss on each cheek and in the mouth—men or women. Needless to say, as this missionary related the story, he did not relish the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation by the men. In fact, he told me that he did not allow men or women to practice, at least in part, the holy kiss on him. Today, in some part of Europe, this mode of salutation is still common among many people, not just church folk.

Have you ever wondered what happened to this particular pattern within the Churches of Christ? An answer to this question is found in J. J. Haley’s (1851-1924) book on *Makers and Molders of the Reformation*. He relates a story that he received from Isaac Errett (1820-1888) concerning the practice of the *Holy-Kiss Pattern* in the early 30s of the nineteenth century. This

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<sup>57</sup> See J. J. Haley, *Makers and Molders of the Reformation* (St. Louis: Christian Board of Publication, 1914; reprint, Joplin: College Press, nd), 77-78 (page references are to reprint edition).

<sup>58</sup> Alexander Campbell, “The Holy Kiss,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (5 September 1831): 413.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 413; see also pages 412-417 for the complete article.

period of time was about the time that the “reformed church” began to isolate itself into a distinctive orthodox organization, that is, detached and independent from other denominations of Christians. Haley tells his readers that in the fanaticism of excessive literalism, Christians practiced the *Holy-Kiss Pattern*. In the following scenario, as reported by Haley, one learns *when and why* the *Holy-Kiss Pattern* came to an abrupt halt—at least in the Pittsburgh church:

### An Incident with a Definite Result

One bright Sunday morning a **big, black, burly Negro man** strode forward, presenting himself for membership in the church at Pittsburgh, where Brother Errett was then a member. It was the custom to march round single file, extending the right hand of congratulation and fellowship to the new convert, imprinting, at the same time, a resounding holy kiss on his glowing cheek. **When the time came for the usual performance to begin on behalf of the brother in black, no one moved. Impassive, unresponsive, statuesque and cold, the people sat, reminding one of a wilderness of marble slabs in an English graveyard, until the situation became intolerably embarrassing and painful.** When sensitive brethren began to feel like looking around for holes in the floor through which to escape, a maiden sister of uncertain age rushed to the front, impulsively embraced her colored brother, implanting a fervent kiss on his dusky cheek, shouting as she did so, “I will not deny my brother his privilege.” **“That,” said Brother Errett, “put an end to the holy kiss in the Pittsburgh church.”**<sup>60</sup> (Emphasis mine—underlining and bold)

## CONCLUSION

The above *patterns* are not all the various *patterns* advocated by Christians. The purpose of this study is to illustrate the utter foolishness exercised on the part of many well-meaning Christians to establish *the pattern* many interpretative communities advocate. This essay is not written to determine the rightness or wrongness of the multifaceted viewpoints over *patterns*—even though this author expresses surprise at the gullibility of so many Christians in their quest to find biblical patterns. In spite of the shock at the lack of caution among so many Christians, nevertheless, the primary objective of this in-depth of patterns is to demonstrate the unequivocal hopelessness of the principles of interpretation exercised by many sincere Christians to establish certain *patterns* as a basis of fellowship.

The real issue among the patternists is not the authority of the Bible, but rather the identification of what the patterns are. All Christians, at least as a whole, believe the Scriptures constitute divine revelation. We quickly notice that in all this confusion over *patterns* that there is still one common thread—pleasing God. **What is the answer to the *pattern predicament*?** One answer is to go back to the drawing board and reconsider the generally accepted view of worship with its five acts. Is there a specific *pattern* or *patterns* advanced in the Scriptures for a worship service? If so, where are the patterns found? Another question that confronts every believer is this: Can we be mistaken over a *pattern* and still be saved? We must also seek an answer to the following question: Does error automatically condemn one to an eternal burning hell? If so, then no one could be saved because no one is without error! These are issues that we

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<sup>60</sup> J. J. Haley, *Makers and Molders of the Reformation*, 413.

must face. It is incumbent upon every believer to strive toward the “unity of the Spirit” through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

Lord willing, I will write another essay based upon a cliché that appears, at least on the surface, to be sound. This slogan is: “We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent.” This particular study will draw attention to the origin and intent of this unique stock phrase, which originally was intended to bring about unity, not discord. This investigation will reveal that Thomas Campbell (1763-1854) coined this catchphrase as it is presently employed within the Churches of Christ, even though Campbell did not mean what Christians within this movement today mean by the same formula. In order for one to fully comprehend this misunderstood phrase, one should examine John Locke’s (1632-1704) essay on *Letters Concerning Toleration*, which analysis contributes to a proper understanding of Campbell’s thoughts about this dictum.