

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where in the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste, places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

VOL. LXXXII

LEBANON, MISSOURI • APRIL 2010

NO. 4

THE ERROR, WAY, & DOCTRINE OF BALAAM

By BENNIE CRYER

Jude 11, Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. 2 Peter 2:15, Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; Revelation 2:14, But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

The Holy Spirit chose Balaam to use as an example of what a man of God should not be. The narrative about this prophet after the Patriarchal order is found in Numbers 22-25 and 31:8, 16. He was a Midianite. He belongs among those who had a knowledge of God but were not descendants of Jacob. Abimelech of Gerar, Melchisedec, Job, and Jethro are some of the examples that show God dealt with others that did not have Jacob as one of their ancestors. Balaam belongs in this group though his knowledge and respect for Jehovah seems faint when compared to some of the others. The Holy Spirit seems to have wanted churches in New Testament times and churches in this 21st Century to learn important lessons from the brief glimpses we have of this Midianite prophet.

THE ERROR OF BALAAM

Error means a wandering off or a forsaking of the right path. The Greeks used this word to describe a planet in the heavens that did not seem to have a set orbit. This word seems to indicate that Balaam was once on the right path and wandered away from it. In 2 Peter 2:10, the Holy Spirit uses these words that accurately describes Balaam and his actions: *Presumptuous are they, selfwilled.* In a shameless and irreverent way Balaam presumed God would let him have his own way even though he knew it was against the will of God. How well did he know the will of God? God had said unto him, *Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.* Numbers 22:12. How could he have misunderstood that commandment? Balak, King of the Moabites, had sent

messengers to Balaam two times to offer him a reward for cursing the children of Israel. They knew that whoever Balaam cursed they were cursed and whoever he blessed they were blessed. Balaam had invited them to stay with him over night so he could talk to God about the matter. In verse 18-19 Balaam told them, *If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.* Verse 18 tells us he understood God’s instructions to him about the matter. Verse 19 shows how selfwilled he was and how he assumed God would change his mind and let him go curse Israel. God telling him one time was not enough for Balaam. He wanted to see what more God would say to him. He is like some today who wander away from the path of righteousness and do not even recognize they are walking in a path away from God’s way.

THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM

The context for this point is found in Revelations 2:12-16. Balaam entertained the Moabite ambassadors because he wanted to see if God would change his mind and say “more” than he had before. The truth is Balaam desired to do more than God had said. Balaamites from the 1st Century to this 21st Century have brought in innovation after innovation because they were not content with what God has said in his word. Like Balaam they wanted more and sometimes less than what the Holy Spirit revealed. Baptism is a case in point, Acts 2:38 teaches the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins clearly: *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* Those who teach salvation by faith only do not like this verse because they believe in the doctrine of salvation by faith only. Balaam understood he could not go beyond the word of Jehovah *to do more or less.*

A few of our own brethren including preachers are following the denominational Balaamites in bringing in new practices and beliefs into their ministries. Dissatisfied with God’s plan of salvation and God’s plan for worship services these few are trying to bring in one new thing after another. When they are questioned about it they try to justify them in the name of tradition or maybe stop their practice but not their belief. Like Balaam they sometimes

... continued on page six

CONTENTS

Vol. LXXXII No. 2



ADVOCATE

ANNOUNCEMENTS 7

The Error, Way, & Doctrine of Balaam..... 1

Candlesticks 2

The Querist Column 3

Rolling the Dice- Gambling in God's Word..... 3

Honoring Our Older Preachers..... 5

The Pioneer of Prosperity Preaching..... 12

FROM THE FIELDS 9,10,11

PUBLISHER

Don L. King
 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550
 Fax 925-454-8995

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER

Ronny F. Wade
 P.O. Box 800337 LaGrange, GA 30240

EDITORIAL STAFF

Clovis Cook
 Bennie Cryer
 Billy Dickinson
 Jerry Dickinson
 Johnny Elmore

Greg Gay
 Carl Johnson
 Barney Owens
 Kevin Presley

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE WEBSITE:

www.oldpathsadvocate.org
 Rick Martin, Website Publisher
 Terry Studdard, Website Asst. Publisher
 Brandon Steward, Webmaster

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single Subscription One Year..... \$13.00
 Also On The Internet
 Published Monthly by **Old Paths Advocate**, Lebanon, MO
 A.C. Brockman, 2033 King James, Lebanon, MO 65536
 periodical postage paid at Lebanon, MO 65536
 Send Form 3579 to **Old Paths Advocate**
 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550.

All articles published in **Old Paths Advocate** contain the view of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors and publishers. If you have any questions, please direct them to the author listed at the heading of the article.

Editorial

CANDLESTICKS

By DON L. KING

There has been much written about the candlesticks of the seven churches of Asia over the years. As John penned the words of our Lord in reference to Ephesus, the threat of removing their candlestick is mentioned in Revelation 2:5. Scholars argue as to whether this referred to a sudden judgment of the Lord, which would cause the Ephesian church to cease to exist or perhaps some other explanation. My understanding is that it likely indicated the church would cease to exist. Notice verse 5 in Revelation 2: *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* Scholars say the present tense of the word “come” has the force of the future, meaning; “I will come.” This might not mean a personal coming, but in some kind of judgment that would fall upon the church. Just how or what that might be is not stated; but however it came to pass, the future was in doubt for Ephesus unless a change came about very soon. To remove a candlestick would obviously indicate the source of light would be lost. The problem is we are told the candlestick was the church itself! (See Chapter 1:20) If, then, the candlestick were to be removed the church would be out of existence. In recent years some have advanced the theory that as long as the worship of a congregation remained free of innovations one could worship there with no harm done. However, let us examine this idea.

As far as we know, all of the churches spoken of as “the seven churches of Asia,” continued to worship without innovations. Ephesus had left their first love but apparently worshiped correctly. There is no mention of their worship being wrong as far as what they did during worship was concerned. However, the Lord does not accept worship offered in a mechanical manner where no real thought is involved, (John 4:24). Apparently, that was the problem at Ephesus. If we apply the modern theory of some that as long as the worship is correct we should not complain, where does that place Ephesus? Jesus said, “...except thou repent.” The cold hard fact is that unless a major change was to take place “quickly,” the Lord planned to remove their candlestick. We must face the truth here: If no changes were made, severe discipline was to take place! Ephesus could not continue as they were and make no changes. It was not permissible for them to ignore the warnings of the Lord. How much success do you suppose Ephesus might have had to simply deny they were doing anything wrong? Can anyone honestly believe the Lord might have accepted that? Think about this: would it have been advisable to worship at Ephesus before the church made changes? How many of us

continued on page six

THE QUERIST COLUMN

BY RONNY F. WADE

Question: Do crosses or crucifixes have any place on or in a church building, or is this simply a form of idolatry?

Answer: The sign of the cross is one of the most important symbols of the Roman Catholic Church. It is displayed on roof tops and towers. It is also seen on alters, furnishings, and ecclesiastical garments. The floor plan of many Catholic churches is laid out in the shape of the cross. Catholic hospitals and schools have the cross adorning the walls. When infants are sprinkled by a Catholic priest he makes the sign of the cross on its forehead saying "Receive the sign of the cross upon thy forehead." During confirmation, the candidate is signed with the cross. On Ash Wednesday, ashes are used to make a cross on the forehead. When Catholics enter the church building, they dip the forefinger of the right hand in holy water, touch the forehead, the chest, the left and right shoulder, thus tracing the figure of the cross. During Mass the priest makes the sign of the cross 16 times and blesses the altar with the cross sign 30 times. No such practices were known or practiced by the New Testament church. In fact the cross was a symbol of shame. It was "the accursed tree" a device of death, "looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:2. Their faith was in what the cross accomplished, not in the "old rugged cross" itself. These early Christians trusted in the full and complete forgiveness that had come to them when Christ died for their sins. It was in this sense that Paul preached the cross 1Cor.1:17-18 "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. Note: it is the "message of the cross," not the wooden frame itself, that saves us. The use of the cross as a symbol pre-dates Christianity according to W. E. Vine. In his Expository Dictionary of New Testaments words on page 248, under cross, he writes: "The shape of the latter (two beamed cross) had its origin in ancient Chaldea, and was used as the symbol of the god Tammuz (being in the shape of the mystic Tau, the initial of his name) in that country and in adjacent lands, including Egypt.

By the middle of the 3rd century A.D. the churches had either departed from, or had travestied, certain doctrines of the Christian faith. In order to increase the prestige of the apostate ecclesiastical system pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols. Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form,

with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ." In almost any book on Egypt one can see on the walls of ancient temples the use of the Tau cross. The cross has been a sacred symbol in India for centuries among non-Christian people. It has been used to mark the jars of holy water taken from the Ganges, also as an emblem of disembodied Jaina saints. The Buddhists, and numerous other sects of India, marked their followers on the head with the sign of the cross. It is likely that the cross upon which our Lord died was only an upright pale or stake, however, whatever its shape it was nothing more than the article upon which He was crucified for our sins. We have no higher authority for using the cross as a symbol of our salvation than paganism and/or Roman Catholicism. In the view of this writer such symbols do not belong in or on our buildings. They are pagan and not Christian. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 800337 LaGrange, GA 30240 or rfwade@charter.net)

ROLLING THE DICE: GAMBLING IN GOD'S WORD

BY SHAHE GERGIAN

In our modern society gambling has many forms: the lottery, horse racing, bingo, casinos, and even raffles-we've got it all! When it comes to determining the morality of gambling, we have more defenses that confuse the issue, rather than convictions which clarify it.

The dictionary defines gambling as 1) a: to play a game for money or property, b: to bet on an uncertain outcome; 2) to stake something on a contingency. To justify gambling, many people say things such as, "Life is a gamble... A farmer planting a crop each year is a gamble... Every time you drive a car is a gamble." No friends. Driving a car is a *risk*. Making a wager on that risk is *gambling*! There is an inherent amount of risk in all activities, but the mere presence of risk does not make it a gamble.

When the subject of gambling is mentioned, there are those who will also reference stock market investors and suggest, "Buying stocks is gambling, but you think that's ok." Is investing in the stock market gambling? When one buys stocks, they are buying part of a company. Stocks are no different than any other commodity. When you buy a house, its value will fluctuate depending on the real estate market. When you buy stock, its value will fluctuate depending on the success of the company. Is there risk involved in purchasing land, stocks, gold or

any other commodity? Yes. Is this gambling? No.

Gambling is different from taking a risk. When gambling thrives, someone suffers. Lost in the glitter of the multimillion dollar winner are all the millions of losers. The winner won at the expense of the loser. This is not at all the same as planting a crop every year, or investing in the stock market let's be honest with ourselves.

Wading through all our rationalizations and defenses, what does the Bible say about gambling and money in general?

First, the Bible gives us three lessons pertaining to money and honorable methods of exchanging money. It speaks of legitimate, honorable ways in which we can transfer things of value.

First, there is the law of labor, which is earning money for the labor expended. Ephesians 4: 28 *"Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need."* (NKJV)

Second, we can find the law of exchange, where a commodity like land, stocks or merchandise is exchanged for its value in money or traded for something equivalent. Proverbs 31: 16 *"She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard."*

Third, the Bible teaches the law of love, where money or gifts are given in love without expectation of something in return. Luke 14: 12-14 *"Then He also said to him who invited Him, 'When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. 13 'But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. 14 'And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.'" Also Luke 6: 35 *"But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil"**

Gambling comes under none of these principles-actually it is the very opposite of them! Please

carefully consider the following five principles and think about how gambling violates them, thus violating God's Word.

1) Gambling is the **"Love of Money,"** in its rawest form. 1 Timothy 6: 9-11 *"But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness."*

Ron Courter writes, "A hard path awaits those who resolve to be rich because they ignore that the love of money promotes and provokes all kinds of evil. He who stretches forward to riches is faced with a constant immersion in grief. The sentiment is that there is no kind of evil to which the love of money may not lead men, when it once fairly takes hold of them."

We need to be so careful friends. Even outside of gambling, we must constantly guard ourselves from slipping into a money loving attitude.

2) Gambling is **Covetousness.** It's an excessive desire to obtain something without a legitimate exchange. It has no intention of giving something of comparable value in return. Colossians 3: 5-6 *"Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,"*

3) Gambling is **Stealing** by consent. This is just as dueling is murder by consent. Consent is not a gauge for rightness or wrongness. The willingness to participate in an activity does not determine whether it is right or wrong! Romans 13: 8-10 *"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' 10 Love does no harm*

to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

When you take your neighbor's money through some manner in which you neither earned it through work or trade, nor did they give it to you as a gift, you are stealing. This undoubtedly includes *all forms* of gambling such as office pools or raffles.

4) Gambling breaks the “**Golden Rule.**” It does not attempt to do something for another, but to take something from another. Mathew 7: 12 “*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*” How many people would continue to gamble if they were guided by this ethic?

5) Gambling breaks the **Second Greatest Commandment**, which is the law of loving your neighbor. Mathew 22: 37-39 “*Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*” Again, you cannot love your neighbor while you steal their money, which you did not earn. Remember when Jesus was asked in Luke 10:29, “Who is my neighbor?”

His response was illustrated in the parable of the “Good Samaritan.” This parable teaches us that anyone and everyone is our neighbor because Jesus said in verse 30 “a certain man.” If all mankind is our neighbor, than we can not unjustly take anyone's money without violating the law of loving our neighbor.

When gambling thrives, another suffers. Always take to heart that “legal” and “moral” is not the same thing. If gambling is wrong in principle, then neither the amount gambled nor the reason for gambling is relevant. Clearly the Bible teaches gambling is a sin because of the five principles it violates: the Love of Money, Covetousness, Stealing (even by consent), the Golden Rule, and the Second Greatest Commandment, the law of loving your neighbor as yourself. 4408 Wildcat Ave., Bakersfield, CA 93313, shahegergian@yahoo.com

HONORING OUR OLDER PREACHERS

By RONNY F. WADE

PAUL O. NICHOLS



Paul Oliver Nichols was born September 5, 1922 and is currently in his eighty-eighth year. He was baptized at the age of fifteen during a meeting in Montebello, CA conducted by Homer L. King. About a year later he began to think about becoming a preacher of the gospel. By the age of eighteen he had fully decided that he would spend his life and energies doing just that. On June 26, 1941, just after his graduation from High School in Hollywood, CA, he left in the company of Ervin Waters, and has been traveling throughout the world proclaiming the glad message of salvation ever since. His first meeting was conducted at the Montebello church where he had earlier obeyed the gospel. He was nineteen at the time, and he and Ralph Mustard worked together in the meeting. In 1949 he held a meeting in Huntington, West Virginia where he met his wife. Within two weeks he and Wilma Jean McKeand were engaged to be married. The wedding took place on November 28, 1949. For over sixty years she was his faithful companion in home life, travel and work. On January 10, 2010 the Lord called her home from service to reward. In 1951 during the Labor Day meeting in Fresno, CA the brethren discussed the possibility of someone going to Africa as a missionary. Paul and Wilma volunteered. A little over a year later on September 24, 1952 they set sail for the distant land of Nyasaland, Africa. Paul was the first preacher from among our brotherhood to undertake such a task.

He was going into uncharted waters. The trip was a success and a work was begun that prospered for years thereafter. He also returned for another stint in 1959 and has since visited the region again. In addition to Africa, Paul has preached and labored in several other foreign works. In the United States he has lived and worked with churches in Bakersfield/Arvin, CA, Jackson, MS, Shreveport, LA, Oakdale and Modesto, CA and Kansas City, KS where he currently lives. Thousands have been privileged to hear the gospel preached because of his intense desire to make it known to others. Preaching has always been serious business with Paul. He has, to the best of his ability, never shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. He did not shy away from difficult or disputed subjects. What he believed he preached. Those who have heard him through the years can testify to the truth of these statements. We believe the world is a better place because he chose to preach the gospel. His current health is reasonably good. He still preaches regularly and often writes articles for the church bulletin in Kansas City as well as the Old Paths Advocate. (You can write to Brother Nichols at 14217 Rosehill Overland Park, KS 66221)



THE ERROR, WAY AND DOCTRINE OF.....continued from page one

confess beating their donkey but do not confess their dissatisfaction with God's will because they feel their own will is more important. That is the doctrine and way of Balaam. Not all of it but enough to taint them so far as God is concerned and the brotherhood.

Some also advocate leaving them alone and try to compare them with Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea. The Lord is the one that removes the candlestick, not us, they say. They fail to teach us how we are to know when he removes the candlestick. It seems to me that the word of God is still the measuring stick we are to use in determining this. There is one thing this measuring stick reveals. The Lord was not going to let their light burn very long. This is confirmed by the Lord's warning to them in Revelations 2:16, *Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* In his salutation to them he introduced himself to them in verse 12 in this way: *These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges.* The sword is likened to the word of God in Hebrews 4:12. In other words Christ was going to discipline them with his word. This was to be done, not by Christ personally but through his faithful preachers and church members. 1 Timothy 3:15 tells us that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. It is a strange thing that these advocates do not compare the churches that are

going astray to the churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia to whom the Lord gave unqualified approval. These two churches seem to be the correct paradigm, not the ones in error. But, alas, it seems some brethren over look the fact that the Lord wrote to the ones in error to correct them not approve them and leave them in their error. How long was the Lord going to put up with their errors? Forever? I think not. The Bible student should think the same thing unless he is following the doctrine of Balaam.

THE WAY OF BALAAM

The way of righteousness is the same as it was in the first Century. God approves the same thing today as he did back then. Furthermore, he condemns the same things today as he did during the early history of the church. Balaam knew that the only way he could get God to curse Israel was to get them to sin. He did this by getting Balak to cause Israel to commit fornication with his people and to eat things sacrificed to idols. Those who walk in the way of Balaam today encourage God's people to commit spiritual fornication by teaching them to practice religious things God has not authorized. Every denominational false doctrine and every innovation that has crept into the Lord's church came in as a result of someone walking in the way of Balaam. Unlike Balaam, those who are loyal and faithful to God only require God to speak one time and they will hear. One command and they will obey. They will not go back and see whether God has changed his mind. They love the truth even when it does not harmonize with their own will.

Finally, and tragically, Balaam walked in the Lord's way for a while but he did not stay the course. Alexander Campbell helped in the restoration of so many New Testament practices, but in his later years he digressed from things he had helped to restore. In my own life time I have seen preachers, young and old, fight the good fight of faith and then later on they turned their back on the thus saith the Lord principle. Even today preachers and brethren are turning away from the things they once mightily stood for. This practice is the way of Balaam. Balaam cried out one time, *Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end belike his!* Look at the death he died in Numbers 31: 8,16.

Brethren, let us all take heed to the warning about walking in the way of Balaam lest our end be like his.



CANDLESTICKS .. continued from page two

would be willing to worship with a congregation that had received an ultimatum such as Ephesus, or any of the congregations Jesus named? According to some among us today, it would have been perfectly all right as long as their worship was free of innovations.

I once supposed that when the candlestick was gone the church would immediately vanish from sight. (We have personally visited the site of Ephesus, and there is no vestige of Christianity remaining there today.)

Remember, Paul also warned the Ephesian elders of future dangers in Acts 20:17-31, etc. Apparently, the warnings of both Paul and Jesus were ignored because the Ephesian church ceased to exist at some future point. However, we wonder how long the church continued to worship in their unsatisfactory state, having left their first love? Could some time have passed between the time the candlestick was removed, and the time the church ceased to exist? That is certainly a possibility and the quotes below offer some interesting support for such a theory.

Recently, I had reason to read the original "**Old Paths Pulpit**," a book of sermons by our preaching brethren published in 1945. On page 81 a sermon written by Brother Ervin Waters begins under the title: "**Spiritual Worship**." On page 84 he is discussing the Ephesian church and his thoughts are interesting. We quote: "*In the beatific vision which John saw on the Isle of Patmos, Christ stood in the midst of seven golden candlesticks (Revelation 1:13) Christ said, The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.*' (Revelation 1:20) *This forcefully teaches that Christ is in the midst of His congregations to bless and to own them. But Christ rebuked the church at Ephesus, 'remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place except thou repent.'* (Revelation 2:5). **The Lord did not threaten to destroy the Ephesian church. The congregation might still remain and worship God regularly; but, if because of their rebellion, their candlestick were removed, Christ would not be in their midst any longer. Some brethren think that the calling of a congregation the church of Christ proves that Christ abides with that congregation and blesses it Let us be careful not to worship with a congregation whose candlestick has been removed because of their departure from the truth.**" (Emphasis mine, DLK)

That is interesting on several levels. Sometimes we might suppose that just because a building exists somewhere with the right name on it, the church is scriptural. However, according to Brother Waters, it could be that the Lord is no longer among them because of some departure from the truth. Yes, the Lord removes the candlesticks, but how long after that happens might it be before the church ceases to exist? That is an interesting thought. If the Lord is no longer among them, what about our worship? Would it be acceptable? How could it be? Ervin's line of reasoning places quite a lot of responsibility on me as I choose a place to worship. I need to have some knowledge rather than just assuming all is well. It would also indicate that when I do know something is wrong, I need to worship elsewhere.

There was once a time when our brethren were very conscientious about where they worshipped, and we suggest a return to such careful planning. Our worship of God is a very serious matter. Think on these things. -DLK

Announcements

WHERE THE SAINTS ASSEMBLE

Many congregations have had changes in times, contacts, and meeting places. All changes are posted at www.oldpathsadvocate.org Please take a moment to go to the website and print out the changes to update your directory. If you would like to order a directory you may do so by going to the website. -Rick Martin

COMMUNION SETS FOR SALES OR RECONDITIONED

I have contact with a company who makes very nice communion sets. They also do a wonderful job in reconditioning your old set to make them look new. The prices are listed below. These are the actual prices that the company charges. I do not charge anything for my service; however, the company who makes these sets has said that in order to keep the cost down that the orders and payments must come from me. If you have an interest in obtaining a communion set please contact me. I prefer you to email me your order. There is less room for errors when I have your order in writing. **My email is: mark@baileyfirst.com; I can also be reached at 972-333-3716 if you do not have an email.**

Set (cup, lid, and plate)

Small cup with one handle (24 -28 oz) \$800.00
 Small cup with two handles (24 -28 oz) \$850.00
 Large cup with one handle (32 -36 oz) \$850.00
 Large cup with two handles (32 -36 oz) \$900.00

Cup Only - Large cup with one handle
 (32 - 36 oz) \$600.00

Large cup with two handles (32 - 36 oz) \$700.00
Lid Only \$145.00 **Plate Only** \$135.00

Reconditioning Only (These prices may change depending upon the condition of the cup)
 A small cup (24-28 oz) with no handles \$270.00
 A small cup (24-28 oz) with one handle \$280.00
 A small cup (24-28 oz) with two handles \$295.00

Plate \$115.00
 15 x 15 Storage Bag - \$21.00

Postage and Insurance
 UPS \$25.00 Insurance \$10.00= \$35.00
 (The cost of the companies shipping the sets back to the owner)

GOLDEN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY



The children of **Roy Lee and Zella Criswell** would like you to join us in a celebration of our parent's **Golden Wedding Anniversary on Saturday, April 3, 2010**. A reception will be held from **1 to 4 PM** at the **Aurora Community Center** (formerly Church of Christ building) **38 West Church Street** (also called Business Hwy 60) Aurora, Missouri. The building is on the South East corner of Washington and Church streets. Please join us for a fun time of refreshments and memories! For those wishing to send cards the mailing address is: 15839 Irish Lane, Cassville, MO 65625.



A BELATED ANNOUNCEMENT

In January of 2010 the Mission Hills church of Christ, Springfield, MO changed their time of services on Lord's Day afternoon. They now meet at 2:00 P.M. Please, make the change in your directories so you will be up to date. -DLK

NEW SONGBOOK

The new songbook "Glory Echoes" is set to be released by this May. The book will be attractively bound with entirely new type-setting and music engraving which will make the book uniform in its appearance and very legible. It will contain a blend of old and new songs I am presently taking pre-orders. There is no need to send money now. Provide me with your name, address and order and the items will ship as soon as they are printed. You may then add the shipping expense to the purchase price. The book will \$5 and a companion CD will be available for \$10. I have attempted to conform to the style and format used by Bro. Lynwood Smith over the years. I humbly approach such a task. If you would like to order books or CDs, you may contact me at legacymusicpublishing@gmail.com or you may write to P.O. Box 1001, Brookhaven, MS 39601. More information can be found at www.legacymusicpublishing.com. - Kevin Presley

Our Departed

TURNER-Brother Henry Turner was born January 22, 1920 in Laclede Co. MO, and departed this life January 12, 2010, at the age of 89, in his home in Springfield. Henry was married to his high school sweet heart Edith Richardson in 1939, who remained his faithful companion until her death. Henry obeyed the gospel under the preaching of Clovis Cook in 1956 and faithfully served the rest of his life. For several years he was an elder in the Lee's Summit church near Lebanon, MO. Henry was a man of his word, and a hard working farmer who earned his living by the sweat of his brow. He had been my friend for over forty years. I was honored to conduct the memorial service. Henry is survived by his sons Gary and Vincent and daughter Janice Eagleburger. He will be missed. -Ronny F. Wade

CARDEN-Neta Laverne Carden was the daughter of Joel Albert and Mina A. Carden, born September 29, 1922 near Phillipsburg, MO and passed away on October 25, 2009 at Marshfield, MO. Neta was baptized by Bro. James Stewart at the age of eleven at the Lees Summit Church near Lebanon, MO. She was a long time member of the 85th and Euclid Church of Christ in Kansas City. Neta was preceded in death by her parents and five sisters, Dorthy Caffey, Bernell Caffey, Glennis Foust, Thelma Ennis, and Gladys Stout and a special nephew, Kenneth Caffey. She is survived by one brother -in-law, Morris Ennis of Kansas City, KS and number of nieces, nephews and a host of friends and other relatives. The writer offered words of encouragement. -Ron Alexander

HOWARD-Joe Willis Howard, the son of the late Joe Henry and Helen Kirkland Howard was born August 9, 1937 and departed this life on December 19, 2009. On August 10, 1958 he was united in marriage to Vineta Young at West Plains, MO. He is survived by his wife, Vineta Howard of Dora, MO, five children, Debra Snodgrass, Dora, Eddie Howard, Dora, Steven Howard and his wife Cindy of Dora, Jeff Howard, Potterville and Justin Howard and wife Katy, Dora, seven grandchildren, one brother Charles and wife, Shirley of Mountain, Home, AR. Joe and his family are long time members of the Odom Church of Christ near Dora. Joe was a great- grand-son of Henry Howard of whom Carl Johnson wrote on The Back Page of the February issue of the OPA. The writer offered words of encouragement. -Ron Alexander

CROUCH-Joyce June Crouch the daughter of Randolph and Dorthy Hope Clardy Chester was born August 13, 1935 in Montgomery County, Tennessee, and departed this life February 4, 2010 at Hartville, MO. On November 27, 1953, she was united in marriage to Edward Crouch and they enjoyed 56 loving years together. Joyce is survived by her husband Ed, and one son, Ed Crouch Jr. of Kansas City, MO. Joyce was a long time member

of the Claxton Church of Christ. Joyce was the Wright County Agent for the Small Town Farm Program for 25 years, an outreach of Missouri University and Lincoln University. Joyce was diagnosed with cancer several years ago and was not expected to live. She put up a good fight and was always out going and upbeat. She was an inspiration to many. The writer offered words of encouragement. -Ron Alexander

MURPHY, Jaunita R. (Hall) was born June 21, 1918 in Rome County, TN. She died January 24, 2010 at her home in Madeira, OH, being 91 years of age. She was married to Hubert E. Murphy who preceded her in death. Also preceding her were her parents and one brother Harry Hall and two sisters Jean Bailus and Nell Applegate. Her family left to mourn her passing are a niece Glenda F. Wilson and husband Paul, one nephew Mark Bailus and wife Stephanie. Juanita was a member of the Sharonville Congregation and attended until her health forbade it. She had asked several years ago that I say a few words at her funeral. I reminded those present of our end upon the earth and the Judgment that awaits all men. -Barney Owens

MIDDLETON- Ronald Clarence Middleton was born on July 29, 1944 in Springfield, Missouri, the son of Clarence and Maxine (Cox) Middleton. He passed away on Feb. 11, 2010 at the age of 65. Ron was united in marriage to Marcelene McLean on May 10, 1968. To this union three children were born, producing six beautiful grandchildren. Ron is also survived by two sisters. He obeyed the gospel in 1977 and was a leading influence at the Jamesville congregation. He spent 35 years as a residential builder and land developer in the Springfield area, building many notable houses in southwest Missouri. He was a member of the Home Builders' Association, serving a term as president. Ron enjoyed good health until June of 2007 when he was diagnosed with myelodysplastic syndrome. Although he underwent a stem cell transplant in October of 2008, he never did completely regain his health. Dan Wissinger assisted me in speaking a few words of comfort and exhortation to a large gathering of about 400 people. The beautiful singing was done by Fred & Greta Harris, Dwight & Caron Smith, and Christi Purcell. Interment was in the Jamesville Cemetery- a picturesque spot that was dear to Ron's heart. In fact, the cemetery lies behind the church house that was built by Ron's great-grandfather many years ago. We are going to miss our beloved brother greatly, but we look forward to the prospect of a glad reunion day!- Billy D. Dickinson

TIDMORE, John Henry, was born July 7, 1945 at Alikchi, OK, to Hezekiah (Lum) and Jennie Tidmore. He was tragically killed in an automobile accident February 20, 2010. He retired from Texas Eastern Oklahoma Railroad as Section Crew Boss in 1992, at which time he opened Tidmore's Auto Sales in Valliant, OK. John was baptized at a early age. He was instrumental in establishing the church at Valliant where he worshipped at the time of his death. He conducted many funerals in the Valliant area where he was well known, as was

evident by the large crowd that gathered to pay respect at his funeral. He was preceded in death by his parents, a daughter, Rhonda Lou; four brothers, Fred, Jewell, David, and Jerry, two sisters, Lillie Ward and Evelyn Williams. He is survived by his daughter Minerva (Sissy) Brewer, one grandson, one granddaughter, and a brother, Frank all of Wright City, OK. Three sisters, Emma Tatum of Oak Hill, Dorothy Imoe and Minnie Lewis of Valliant, OK. John was a staunch supporter of the Gospel and a lover of Gospel singing. He will be sorely missed by the Congregation at Valliant. William St. John did a great job leading the large gathering in singing. Words to encourage obedience to the Gospel without delay were spoken as evidenced by John's sudden and unexpected death.-Barney Owens

BAKER-Evelyn Baker, after ten years of suffering from Alzheimer's, passed from this life early Sunday morning the 14th of February. Her husband Finley had faithfully attended her every need for all that time and with the assistance of his children was able to keep her at home. Though she hasn't known the family for many years, she'll never be forgotten by those whom she had the greatest influence upon. At her memorial service, her children rose to call her blessed. Luke Post, Aaron Degough, and I feebly attempted to offer words of comfort to the family; however, her life spoke for itself. Finley and Evelyn enjoyed over 60 years of marriage and have a loving family. She'll certainly be missed, but her life's work of raising her children will live on. Our very best to them and God's comfort in their loss. -Douglas T. Hawkins

Field Reports

Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 800337 LaGrange, GA 30240
 March 16-In the recent past we have been privileged to work with the following churches in meetings: Oklahoma City (21st) where we had good crowds and cooperation from surrounding congregations. The TV program out of this city has attracted hundreds of responses and several conversions. Cliff Arney does an excellent job tracking the tapes, sermons, and mail-outs. He is to be commended for his hard work. Next we were in Oakdale, CA. This church is active and growing. Our crowds were outstanding. A full house a number of times. Preachers from several places attended and were an encouragement. One returned to the fold after ten years absence. Lord willing our next includes Columbia, MO April 7-11, Arlington, TX April 14-18, and Napoleon, AL May 2-9. The work in the LaGrange area continues. Our TV program out of Columbus continues to bring in leads and conversions. The church here is doing well and we thank God for the peace and dedication of the membership that we enjoy.

Clint De France, 5036 Clark Lane #101, Columbia, MO 65202, Cdfrance87@yahoo.com, March 16- this year has gotten off to a good start with meetings in Manteca, CA, Brookhaven, MS and Weatherford, TX. Each of the meetings were very well attended from the community

and other congregations. I want to offer my sincerest thanks to the families that kept me in their homes I was treated very graciously by all. I look forward to being in Imperial, NE Mar. 31-Apr. 4; Phalba, TX Apr. 16-18; Lebanon, MO (Lee Summit) Apr. 21-25. The work is going well here in Columbia. We were glad to have a man to obey the gospel here recently who had been attending services for some time and I am studying with several others. The church here is looking for a new evangelist to work here after I move to Texas. Please pray for our efforts.

P. Duane Permenter, 1705 Pecan Dr., Cleburne, TX, March 8-We arrived at DFW on March 2 and the trip was good. We had to spend one night in London during our trip home as the journey was made. It is certainly good to be back in the USA. The Lord has blessed us abundantly and we are thankful. We were privileged to hear Clint DeFrance a couple of nights at Weatherford, TX. I am going to preach at Cleburne, TX today. We will be back in the US for a few months and then plan to return to Zambia to continue the good work in that distant place. Laurie and I have a few medical needs that we could not get taken care of in Zambia. We are home to get those things treated and cared for. Please pray for us and God bless the faithful everywhere! duane_and_laurie@yahoo.com or permenter@icconnect.zm

Douglas T. Hawkins 409 Worthington Pl. Richmond, KY 40475 (606) 271-0529 douglast69@bellsouth.net: I'm currently with the church in Jamesville, MO. I'm thoroughly enjoying the opportunity to be with these brethren in the meeting. A number of area gospel preachers were with us last night. Among them were Smith Bibens, Roy Lee Criswell, and Isaac Bunner. Of course, this is where Brother Billy Dickinson makes his home. I'm currently staying with Billy and Judy and enjoying their company immensely. This Springfield area is blessed to have so many wonderful people living here. It makes me fondly remember when Lori and I lived in the Ozarks. My next appointments are with Hartwell, AR and Dothan, AL in May. Later in the year I'm planning to be with the churches at Spring Valley, WV for Labor day; Harrodsburg, IN; Longwood, FL; and Piedmont, AL. I hope to see many friends and loved ones at these places. Lord bless us in his service.

Bennie T. Cryer, 4635 Larkin Rd., Live Oak, CA 95953, January 29, 2010, I enjoy The Old Paths Advocate and am happy to have it in our home. I appreciate its stand for the truth and its opposition to error in the Lord's church. The last two months I have preached in Grape Vine, TX where I was also among many that enjoyed a very successful Preacher's Study. The congregation is to be commended for handling the study in a good way, and providing great hospitality for the many visitors that came. I have also preached at Olivehurst, CA and Escalon, CA. The congregation at Olivehurst is doing well and I enjoy working with them very much. My prayer is for peace in the brotherhood and a joyous year

for us all.

Kevin W. Presley, 94 Sandalwood Trail, Brookhaven, MS 39601, February 23, 2010. It was my pleasure to be with the church at Council Hill, OK a few weeks ago. We had an encouraging time together in the Lord's work. The congregation had a congregational singing at the local community center on Saturday and advertised it among the townsfolk. Several came and a few later attended the evening service of the meeting. Our February meeting here at the Hwy 84 congregation in Brookhaven, MS was a spiritual feast for us all. Bro. Clint DeFrance did a wonderful job proclaiming the truth. His preaching was well received and he had nearly a full building to preach to each service. Our next meeting will be with Bro. Joe Hisle in July. By the time this report is printed I will have been with the church at Edmond, OK. I will next go to Neosho, MO (March 27-April 4) and Ada, OK (April 18-25). I am anticipating an early May shipment for the next songbook "Glory Echoes." I'm taking pre-orders now. You can find information elsewhere in this journal or at www.legacymusicpublishing.com. The north side congregation in Springfield, MO will be hosting a singing on Sat, June 19 to learn songs from the new book. I hope many can come and enjoy the singing with us.

Don L. King, 1147 Shery Way, Livermore, CA 94550, March 15, old_paths@juno.com The church at home continues to enjoy sweet peace and we are thankful for that. Rick Martin recently closed a good meeting for us in spite of sickness he experienced while here. He was unable to get here on time due to weather problems in Atlanta so we began the meeting on our own. We enjoyed having Rick and Jane in our home during the week and all the good visits as well. Also enjoyed hearing Clint DeFrance in Manteca recently. Last week we enjoyed hearing Ronny Wade three times in Oakdale. His preaching was right down the line, as we expected. Lord willing, we are to be at Yuba City next Lord's Day. We appreciate those of you who have recently subscribed to the paper and encourage others to do the same. If you can, please subscribe for a friend or family member at the same time. We continue to need your prayers as always. May the Lord bless the Brotherhood everywhere.

Sean S. McCallister, 1009 Republic Street, Ardmore OK 73401-- February 8, 2010. The year of 2010 holds great promise. I began the year with around four hundred other Christians at the Dothan, AL New Year's Meeting. This is one of the highlights of my year as we consistently have good teaching, singing and fellowship. On the first Lord's Day of the new year I was asked to speak at the Wichita Falls, TX congregation where the subjects of zeal without knowledge and true Bible unity were preached. These lessons were well received and commended to the congregation by Brother Jimmy Cating who works with that congregation. At the end of January I held a meeting at West Monroe, LA. The sermons preached were: "Taglines of the Liberal

Movement,” “Is It Wrong to be Right?” “Hear, O Israel,” and “Confusion and Union.” These sermons contained many modern religious issues such as the need for scriptural practices, the Christian’s attitude, hypocrisy, liberal opposition to scripture, church history and biblical unity. The meeting was well attended by community visitors, area congregations and fellow gospel preachers: Kevin Presley, Cullen Smith, Bruce Roebuck, Al Felder and Michael Conley. The size and diversity of the crowds indicated the hard work that the brothers and sisters of the congregation accomplished for the gospel. I appeal to all of our evangelists and teachers to preach some basic principles which are in dire need and to spend time with our youth. History proves that we need to indoctrinate our youth with solid scriptural principles in order to win future battles. I look forward to the next meeting which is to be held at the 79th and Kansas congregation, Kansas City KS on March 12-14.

Darrell Crawford bugzl955@hotmail.com 208 E. Baldwin Rd. Apt. S Panama City, FL 32405. The last month has been very busy, rewarding and emotional for us. By now we are living and working in Panama City, FL. We are very excited about the work here and hope to strengthen the church here spiritually, and to help them grow numerically as well helping to add more souls to the Kingdom while there is yet time. On the way here we were able to spend some time with some dear friends, Harlon and Annie Howell; they are special to us both. We also enjoyed worshipping and preaching at Birmingham, AL. We have also worshipped and spoken at Oyster Bay in Florida and at the Dothan, AL. congregations. They are all very dear to us for their work’s sake. Please continue to pray for the work here in the Florida panhandle and surrounding area. Let us all hold to the old paths and may the Lord bless His church everywhere.

VIRGILIO O. DANA O SR., 94-371 Ikepono St., Waipahu, HI 96797; March 5, 2010; vdanao@hawaii.rr.com The annual preaching itinerary of Bro. Don L. King in the Philippines covering the period from January 2 to 20, 2010, as always, was a success. Bro Frank Brancato of the Planz Road congregation in Bakersfield, CA accompanied him. Most of the time, I interpreted for them throughout their trip. There were a total of 108 baptisms made in several congregations, where they conducted studies and meetings, located in the provinces of Tarlac, Pangasinan, Ilocos Norte, Cagayan, Kalinga, Quirino and Isabela, and in Makati City in Metro Manila and Baguio City. Their sermons played a vital role in winning lost souls back to God’s fold in these areas. The local brotherhood continues to look forward to the yearly preaching visit of Bro. King and others in the Philippines. I consider it a rare privilege to work with, and interpret for, brethren King and Brancato. Though most of their itinerary was confined to Luzon, on January 16th, we flew to Palawan to join brethren Alan Bonifay, Greg Cardosa

and Eduardo Danao who went ahead of us there. We worked in two groups, and each held meetings in places already scheduled for us. The preachers study held in Samaritana (Brooke’s Point) on January 18th, where vital subjects were taught by our American evangelists, was a success. Many questions were asked, and were answered in the light of the teaching of the Scriptures. All were satisfied and enlightened. 43 were baptized in Palawan. Brother’s King and Brancato flew back to the U.S. on January 20th, while brethren Bonifay, Cardosa, Eduardo and myself proceeded to the island province of Mindoro to continue our scheduled itinerary there. We held meetings in different places. Bro. Philip Labagan, a long time preacher of a Pentecostal group, mostly attended by the Mangyan tribes in Abra de Ilog, made public his stand with us. On January 24th, we held our Sunday morning worship service at his congregation in Bungahan. To further ground the Church leaders and preachers in Mindoro, we conducted a day study with them held in Barahan (Sta. Cruz), where Bro. Edilberto Sungcang preaches. Our preaching efforts there yielded 57 baptisms. We flew to Dipolog City (Zamboanga del Sur, Mindanao) on January 27th Bro. Conrado Libertino who works there scheduled our preaching itinerary in his area and in a neighboring province of Misamis Occidental. He has been in contact with several digressive preachers, and when we were there they publicly made their stand with us. A one day study with them on January 30th helped them better understand the New Testament teachings on major issues that used to differentiate us. A total of 10 baptisms were made in Mindanao. Perhaps, there would have been more baptisms, if our schedule for North Cotabato had not been cancelled because of the political unrest in the area. Brother’s Bonifay and Cardosa flew back to the U.S. on February 2nd. I am also grateful to have the opportunity to work with them, who, like Brethren King and Brancato, are hard workers and capable men. Eduardo and I interpreted for them. The entire preaching itineraries in the Philippines covering the period from January 2nd to February 2nd resulted to a total of 218 baptisms. Of course, this number could have not been reached without the combined efforts of our local preaching brethren everywhere our American evangelists were to preach. On February 3rd, I went to Roxas, my hometown in the Philippines. As always the case whenever I go there, the Roxas Church, through the initiative of the leaders, hosted a two-day study attended by preaching brethren and Church leaders from the provinces of Cagayan, Quirino, Kalinga and Isabela. While there, I also helped in the efforts of evangelism. I was asked to preach on two Sunday worship services, February 7th, and 14th in Roxas, and the latter yielded five baptisms immediately after the service. I was back here in Hawaii on February 18th. The Church here is at peace. Last Sunday, February 28th, we were blessed to have with us Brother Bennie and Sister Joan Cryer of Live Oak, CA, as well as Art and Nan Oestmann of Midland, TX. May the good Lord bless you all.

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE (USPS 407-560)

If the date near your name and address reads 4-10 your subscription expires with this issue. Please renew promptly. DLK
Send all subscriptions to:
1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550

THE BACK PAGE...

THE PIONEER OF PROSPERITY PREACHING

BY CARL M. JOHNSON

Oral Roberts, a dirt-poor farm boy who popularized the idea of a "prosperity gospel" while becoming one of the world's most recognizable televangelists, died December 15, 2009, at the age of 91. Roberts was born near Ada, Oklahoma. His family's religious background was Pentecostal/Methodist, but one of his cousins was actually a longtime, faithful member of the Lord's church here in Ada.

When I was a child in the 1950s, we lived on the corner of 4th and Townsend directly across the street from a large, vacant field called "Blake's Field." The field was rented from time-to-time by traveling circuses, carnivals, and tent revivalists. Bud Chambers' traveling salvation show made an annual stopover at Blake's Field, but it was Oral Roberts' faith-healing tent revivals that drew the largest crowds.

Roberts claimed God spoke to him when he first began to preach and told him to "heal the people as He (God) did." Roberts said he could feel the power to heal by the tingling of his right hand. Anecdotal evidence of Roberts' reputed healings made news as many of his followers claimed their ailments had disappeared during a revival. At his first healing service, a woman reportedly said her right hand, crippled for 38 years, had been restored. Another evening, a blind man is said to have shouted, "I can see! I can see!" However, no actual evidence ever confirmed Roberts' ability to heal.

A young girl with a Pentecostal background anxiously anticipated one of Roberts' visits to Ada. The girl, a close friend to one of my sisters, had badly crossed eyes and she wore thick glasses. She was confident "Brother Roberts" would heal her. Roberts told the girl to leave her glasses off for two weeks and she would be healed. Her eyes worsened, however, and she was told she obviously "didn't have enough faith." The poor girl was devastated.

In the 1950s Roberts pioneered the use of television and computerized databases to spread his message in relentless direct-mail campaigns. He promised financial riches for those who gave to God-which he called "planting a seed of faith." Soon his television program was being carried by more than 200 stations across the country, and within twenty years his organization was employing over 2,000 people and bringing in over \$100 million annually.

It was during that period that Roberts announced plans for building Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, and "The City of Faith," his vision for a hospital, clinic, and diagnostic and medical research center that would merge medicine and prayer, at a cost of \$400 million. It was also during this period that life began to unravel for Roberts. During one stretch when funds were scarce, Roberts told donors about having a face-to-face encounter with Jesus, who stood 900 feet tall. Posters promptly popped up in Tulsa showing a traffic sign that read, "Caution 900 ft. Jesus-Crossing." Columnists, political cartoonists and comics had a field day with Roberts' claim.

Jerry Sholes, a former employee, wrote a tell-all book entitled, **Give Me That Prime-Time Religion**, revealing, among other things, the preacher's expensive tastes for Italian suits, diamond rings, a private jet, luxury homes, fancy cars, and country club memberships. Negative publicity and declining TV ratings caused Roberts to struggle to find creative ways to raise money to cover his organization's huge expenses. In 1987 he announced that he had to raise \$8 million or "God will call me home." The owner of a dog-racing track in Florida eventually made a large donation that allowed Roberts to reach his goal. Critics questioned the appropriateness of Roberts accepting money from a man who promoted gambling. They argued the money was "tainted." Roberts reportedly answered, "The only taint on this money is that there t'ain't more of it!"

Eventually, the hospital closed its doors because of a lack of funds, and Roberts' son resigned as president of the university amidst charges of fraudulent financial practices. The death of Roberts removes the pioneer of modern prosperity preachers from the scene, but his legacy remains alive and well. After five decades faith healers and prosperity preachers are now fleecing their TV viewers out of more than a billion dollars annually.

Their con is actually more effective than that of the notorious Bernie Madoff, the former Wall Street figure who bilked an estimated \$18 billion from investors over a 20-year period. In Madoff's case investors were shocked and angry when they learned of his scam. Yet, incredibly, religious con artists continue on with the silent acceptance of most of the religious community. The Word of God condemns them, however, with the harshest possible language. Paul says they are "men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain" (1 Tim. 6:5). Peter calls them false prophets with hearts trained in greed (2 Pet. 2:14). They may continue to deceive and fleece multitudes who are destitute, disabled, elderly, sick, suffering, or dying, but they will not deceive God. They shall receive their just reward (Gal. 6:7-8). carlmj@cableone.net