

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

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

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

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

VOL. LXXXVI

LEBANON, MISSOURI • FEBRUARY 2014

NO. 2

WAS JESUS CREATED?

BY ANDREW RICHARDSON

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, of the “Jehovah’s Witnesses” teaches that Jesus Christ is a created being; that God first created Him before creating everything else by Him. They say on their website:

“...the Bible plainly states that in his prehuman existence, Jesus was a created spirit being, just as angels were spirit beings created by God. Neither the angels nor Jesus had existed before their creation” (http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/article_05.htm).

In short, they are flat out wrong. Jesus and God are a united deity. Though the Son is not the Father, and the Father is not the Son (John 6:38; 1 Cor. 11:3; 15:27-28), they are still “one” (Isa. 9:6; John 1:1; 10:30; Phil. 2:6-8; 1 John 5:20), being united in the divine nature. It is in Jesus that the fullness of the “Godhead” (deity and divine nature) dwells (Col. 2:9), and deity has indefinite existence.

In Revelation 22:13, Jesus professes to be the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” “Alpha” and “Omega” are the first and last Greek letters (thus covering the entire alphabet), so Christ is proclaiming to compass all that is, having existed before the creation of “all things” (John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17), and having brought everything into existence. He also is the “end” of all things, because everything reaches its purpose in Him, for Paul declared “all things” were created “for Him” (Col. 1:16). Not only that, He will literally be the “end” of all things when He returns (2 Pet. 3:1 Off; Rev. 21:5). Jesus used this same expression in other instances (Rev. 1:17; 2:8), and so does Jehovah in Isaiah 48:12, saying, “...I am he; I am the first, I also am the last” (cf. Isa. 41:4; 44:6). How many of us would approach the idea of Jehovah having a beginning? Yet, Christ assumes the same designation. Like Jehovah, Jesus has always been.

Micah prophesied beforehand, saying,

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (5:2).

This prophecy is applied to Jesus in the New Testament (Matt. 2:6; John 7:42), and beyond doubt verifies His eternal past, saying He is from “everlasting.”

In a discussion with the Jews, Jesus told them His “day” had been seen by Abraham (John 8:56), but when asked how this was possible, since Jesus, as it seemed, wasn’t old enough to have been seen by Abraham, He replied, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (v. 58). Jehovah also identifies Himself as “I am,” and “I am that I am” (Ex. 3:14). It denotes His self-existence, and Jesus claims the same. Jesus and God have neither beginning nor end. They just simply exist of themselves. There is a reason Jesus chose “I am” as opposed to saying, I was. The Jews knew exactly what Christ was saying, and for this reason they prepared to stone Him (v. 59), which they began to do on another occasion when they perceived that He was expressing equality with God (John 10:33).

At the first of John’s gospel it is evident that Jesus had no genesis. As touched on earlier, John explains how Jesus, “the Word,” existed before the start of creation (of anything). He says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (1:1). The beginning of what? All creation! John continues on in the third verse: “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” The apostle confirms that everything created (“made”) was created by the Word. After saying “all things,” he proceeds to be more explicit and says nothing was made “without Him,” but if He was made by God, then it is not true that “without Him was not any thing made that was made.” Nothing is excluded. Jesus was not created, otherwise He created Himself.

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single Subscription One Year..... \$15.00
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

NEW YEAR MEETINGS

By: RONNY F. WADE

It was my privilege to once again attend the Alabama New Year Meeting in Dothan, Alabama. This may well be the best one of all since its beginning thirteen years ago. Over four hundred people gathered to hear Bible based sermons, great gospel singing and pray together for the good and progress of the Kingdom of Christ. In addition to the gospel centered services there was an abundance of time for great association with some of the best people on earth. Many precious memories are made at such meetings that will last a lifetime. The young people present had an opportunity to visit with old friends and make new ones. The value of such association reaches even to eternity. We have also heard of the great success of the Oklahoma meeting conducted this year by John Strain and the Moore, OK congregation. Reports indicate that around seven hundred gathered for the singing and edification provided during the meeting. The last night brother Johnny Elmore directed the singing that saw the going away of an old year and the beginning of a new one. Johnny in years past had led the singing as only he was able to do. This year much of his time had been dedicated to the care of his wife Sally who has been ill. It was so good to hear that he was able to return this year and lead the singing once again. Kevin Presley always leads the midnight singing in Alabama and does a tremendous job. We also know that Christians in Arizona gathered in Tucson where Brother Doug Hawkins assisted them in their annual meeting at this time of year. There may have been other such meetings of which we are unaware. But wherever they were held, we feel sure that great good was accomplished. The point of this editorial is to encourage such gatherings among the Christians of our day. In a world that is so steeped in sin where ungodliness awaits us on every hand, those people who strive to serve God and keep their garments pure, need a respite from the works of evil. Such meetings as New Year meetings, Labor Day meetings, Fourth of July meetings etc. offer that respite. We are aware that at all times and in all places there must be those who stay at home and keep the home fires burning. You who do so are not forgotten. The stability you offer and the example of dedication and faithfulness you exhibit are greatly appreciated. To those who have never attended such meetings, may I suggest that you seriously consider attending one at some future date. To parents who have teen-age children, may I encourage you to take them to one of

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QUERIST COLUMN

By Ronny F. Wade

Question: Would you please describe the proper attitude we should manifest toward brethren with whom we disagree?

Answer: The proper relationship and attitude we have with our brethren in Christ is critical to the success of the church as well as our own eternal salvation. It is indeed “good and pleasant” for brethren to dwell together in unity and peace. From time to time, however, there will be disagreements and perhaps strained feelings among those who seek to follow the teachings of the scriptures. The way we react to each other and those differences could determine the future of the church for years to come. The following scriptures define an approach that we all would do well to follow. “Therefore let us pursue the things that make for peace and the things by which one may edify another Romans 14:9. Edify is defined as “the act of one who promotes another’s growth in Christian wisdom, holiness, piety, happiness” Thayer. We should seek to strengthen those with whom we disagree. They may need to be taught not only the truth, but the danger of going beyond what is written as well. I must always measure what I say by how it affects others. If by encouragement and teaching I can induce one to embrace the truth, I have been successful. If I win the argument, but lost the brother, I have not been successful. In Eph. 4:32 Paul writes “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you.” The world needs more kindness. So does the church. That doesn’t mean that I won’t point out the faults of a brother, but it does mean that I will not be cruel, harsh and unforgiving. I will never be rude or mean, “Love is kind...” ICor. 13:4. Kindness can open a heart or home where arguments never could have. In Hebrews 3:12-13 “Beware brethren lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, but exhort one another daily, while it is called today lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” We all need to be exhorted from time to time in those matters that affect our salvation. If I am weak and fail to carry my part of the load, someone needs to care

enough about me to “exhort” me to better. If I am flirting with unscriptural practices someone needs to exhort me about the danger of such a course. If I take lightly the warnings of God’s word, I need to be exhorted about that. If my practices are wrecking havoc in the brotherhood, someone needs to exhort me in that matter so I can realize my mistake and change before it is too late. If I become stubborn and refuse to listen to those whose wise instruction could lead me back to the truth, I risk the loss of my soul. In Hebrews 12:6 we are told “for whom the Lord loves, he chastens.” There are times when we need to be chastened. Just as our parents chastened us when we were children, God chastens us as His children when we need it. In dealing with some brethren who have openly violated the scriptures, it is often necessary for some good brother or brethren to take that person aside and seek to correct him/her so that they can change their behavior and remain pleasing to God. Such a task is often difficult, but needed. Brethren who fail to heed such warnings, chart for themselves a path of heartache and difficulty. In James 5:16 “Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another, that you may be healed the effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Often what we fail to do, the Lord can accomplish. I have tried many times to get certain people to change, without success. Often people criticize, run someone down, threaten, talk about them, and resort to whatever they feel might help, without success. But how often do we pray for those same people? We should never treat our brethren with whom we agree or disagree in a way that brings shame upon the name of Christ, and endangers our soul. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

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OUR NEIGHBOR

By JIM WINCHESTER

Our Lord was a master teacher. His teachings were simple, easy to understand and blessed all those who followed Him. Jesus used simple every day events to illustrate His teachings. Jesus taught with simplicity the gospel of salvation. The apostle Paul wrote, "But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Cor 1:27).

The parables of Jesus were profound, but easily understood. They often left His critics speechless. In Luke 10 the question asked by "a certain lawyer" provided an opportunity for Jesus to illustrate the kind of reaction He expects in the lives of His followers.

Among the multitude who were following Jesus there were those who sought to discredit Him. The lawyer's question was his way of testing Jesus. No doubt the lawyer mentioned was a Jewish leader who had heard about the teachings of Jesus.

The lawyer, who was an expert in the old Law asked Jesus, Teacher... what must I do to inherit eternal life? The question in this case was not sincere, as can be seen in the text: "And, behold a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (v. 25).

Jesus answered his question with two other questions. Jesus' response was simple, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" The expert answered correctly by quoting from Dent 6:5 and Lev 19:18. One must, "...love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

This could have been an appropriate answer to the lawyer. "You ask me what you should do; well, you profess to be a teacher of the law, you ought, therefore, to know what is written in the law."

The man's response should have been, How can I do this? I am not able. I need help. Instead, he tried to justify himself, in an effort to defend himself against the implications of Jesus' words. The lawyer was trying to remove the focus from himself by asking who is my neighbor?

The lawyer was trying to show that he had kept the law. Perhaps his desire was to justify himself for asking the question or prove that it could not be easily settled by a mere reference to the words of the law.

It was still a question of what was meant by the term neighbor. The Pharisees held that the Jews only were to be regarded as neighbors, and that the obligation did not extend at all to the Gentiles. The lawyer was probably ready to affirm that

he had discharged faithfully his duty to his countrymen, and had kept the law, and could justify himself. Some sinners desire to justify themselves. They seek to do it by their own works. For this purpose they pervert the meaning of the law, destroying its spirituality, and bringing the law down to their own standard, rather than attempting to live their lives by its requirements.

Jesus answered his question by telling the Parable of the Good Samaritan. This is a well known Parable. If one has the mind of a neighbor, he will see and help his neighbor. The Samaritan, an outcast, was the only one who helped the man.

Jesus answered him in a very different manner from what he expected. By one of the most tender and meaningful narratives to be found anywhere, he made the lawyer his own judge in the case, and forced him to admit what at first he would probably have denied. He compelled him to acknowledge that a Samaritan, a race most hated by the Jews, had shown the kindness of a neighbor, while a priest and a Levite had denied compassion to their own countryman.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho descends approximately 3,000 feet in about 17 miles. From Jerusalem to Jericho the country was rocky and mountainous, and in some parts scarcely inhabited. It was a dangerous road to travel for robbers hid along its steep, winding road. This road was also used frequently. Jericho was a large place, and there were many who traveled to Jerusalem. The road offered many convenient places for thieves and robbers to hide.

And Jesus answering said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead" (v. 30).

"And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side" (v. 31). A priest, one expected to love others, avoided the wounded man. This priest had been up to the temple to perform his part of the service; he was much too good, in his own opinion, to go and touch a man who was wounded and so, "he passed by on the other side."

"Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side" (v. 32). Levites were descendants of Levi and they assisted the priests in the temple. He did a little more than the priest, who would not even cross the road but ultimately chose to likewise do nothing for this injured man.

"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you" (v. 33-35).

The Samaritans were scorned by the Jews because of their mixed Jewish and Gentile ancestry. The Samaritans were the most chronic foes of the Jews. They had no dealings with each other. It was this fact which rendered the conduct of this good man so striking, and which was in strong contrast with the conduct of the priest and the Levite. It is ironic, that a Samaritan helped the half-dead man, dressing his wounds, taking him to an inn, and paying his expenses. By asking "which ...was his neighbor?" (v. 36), Jesus was teaching that a person should be a neighbor to anyone he meets in need. Jesus wrapped up His teaching with the command that His followers were to live like a true neighbor (v. 37).

"Go, and do thou likewise" (v. 38). Evidence of following Christ is found in showing kindness to friend and foe alike.

SUMMARY

- That the knowledge of the law is useful to make us acquainted with our own sinfulness and need of a Savior.
 - That it is not he who professes to know the law that shall be saved, but he that puts into practice.
 - That religion requires us to do good to "all" people, however "accidentally" we may become acquainted with their calamities.
 - That we should do good to our enemies. Real love to them will lead us to deny ourselves, and to sacrifice our own welfare, that we may help them in times of distress.
 - That he is really our neighbor who helps us in our greatest need and especially if he does this when there has been a controversy or difference between us and him.
 - We see the beauty of religion when we are helping others.
 - True religion teaches us to regard every man as our neighbor; prompts us to do good to all, to forget all national or sectional distinctions, and to aid all those who are in need of our help.
 - Christians cannot close their eyes to the needs of others.
- "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).
- Nothing that a young person achieves will be more important than to see the people of the world as one great family, and to learn early to do good TO ALL.
 - The difference between the Jew and the Samaritan was a difference in "religion" and "religious opinion;" and from the example of the Samaritan we learn that while people differ in "opinions" on subjects of religion, and while they are zealous for what they believe to be the truth, they should still treat each other with kindness.

• Paul warns Timothy and Titus about men who were divisive and would divert their attention from things that were more important. "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men. But

avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain" (Titus 3:8-9).

- "A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory" (Matt 12:20). Jesus would not continue to oppress those who had a little strength; he would not take away their hope when it seemed to be almost gone. He would not be like the Pharisees, proud and overbearing, and trampling down the poor. He will not treat them harshly, but will kindle their feeble flame into a blaze. The Priest and Levite's self-righteousness judged the injured man unworthy of their help. We must not be motivated by selfishness, fear, and a false sense of security.
- Remember the words of the Apostle Paul, "Love never fails."
- Stand for truth, but never sacrifice the basic truth taught by Christ. "Go, and do thou likewise" (v. 38).

DON'T GO OVER YONDER

By RICK MARTIN

A Drug Enforcement Administration officer stopped at a ranch in Montana and talked with the old rancher. He told the rancher, "I need to inspect your ranch for illegally grown drugs." The old rancher says, "Okay, but do not go over yonder in that pasture," as he pointed out the location.

The DEA officer verbally explodes, saying, "Mister, I have the authority of the federal government with me." Reaching into his pocket, he removes his badge and proudly displays it to the farmer. "See this badge? This badge means I am allowed to go wherever I wish, on any land. No questions asked or answers given. Have I made myself clear? Do you understand?" The old rancher nodded politely, apologized, and went about his chores.

A short time later, the old rancher heard loud screams and saw the DEA officer running for his life, chased close behind by his prize bull. The officer was clearly terrified. The old rancher threw down his tools, ran to the fence, and yelled at the top of his lungs, "Your badge! Show him your badge!"

This story is of course fiction, but I believe it illustrates a point. Much like this old rancher God has told us places not to go. From the beginning of God's revealed written revelation to man, God placed warnings in His Word for man not to change it. Moses said; Deut. 4:2 "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither

shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you". The wise man wrote, "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" Pro. 30:6. John ended the Revelation by giving this warning about the revelation: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" Rev. 22:18-19.

A rejection of God's Word will result in man's eternal damnation. Peter quoted a promise by Moses saying: Acts 3:22-23 "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people". Paul, after telling the Galatians of his amazement of their deserting the gospel of Christ, tells them, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" Gal. 1:8-9. Accursed is to be eternally cut off from God and thus doomed for destruction. God will not tolerate any tampering with or rejection of His Word as revealed in the Bible. Sadly, some have gone to places they should not be. They have changed, ignored, and rejected God's clear Word and He will not hold them guiltless.

The Bible teaches that it is a pattern, and our obligation is to obey it; Rom. 6:17 "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Form is elsewhere translated "pattern." Paul teaches us that we are to "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" 2 Tim. 1:13.

The Hebrews' writer makes a comparison between the Old Testament tabernacle and the church of our Lord. He informs us that God was concerned with the pattern of the tabernacle; Heb. 8:5 "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was

about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." What stands out is that if God, under the inferior covenant, wanted His instructions carried out with exactness, then should we not expect the same with the superior covenant. God says, here is what you are supposed to do, don't go over yonder. Some have a careless attitude about what God says. They believe they can go anywhere they want to. God has given us a pattern and He is concerned about that pattern.

The Bible is God's Word; it is not the word of man; 1 Thess. 2:13, For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. Holy men of God wrote what God instructed them to write; 2 Pet. 1:21 "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." What they wrote was inspired of God; 2 Tim. 3:16-17 "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"

It is unfortunate that many people will not listen when they are warned not to go to certain places. They believe they have a badge or license that allows them to go anywhere they want to go. Many men and congregations have gone to places doctrinally that they have no business going to. God's Word puts some restrictions on where and how far you can go in worship. Heed the warnings of God's word and stay out of places where you should not be, lest you find yourself in a perilous place. We are not given a badge or license that allows us to go anywhere we want to go. God has told us where he wants us to be; He has said, don't go over yonder. -Rick Martin, 300 Clubview Terrace, Woodstock, GA 30189. mmartin@bellsouth.net

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WAS JESUS CREATED?continued from page one

Anything that falls into the "made" category was made by Jesus.

Interestingly, the 1984 edition of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society's New World Translation attest to the same, which reads: "All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing

came into existence.” “Not one thing!” Yet they turn right around and say there indeed was one thing that came into existence apart from Jesus-Jesus!

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, reiterates the same: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, ...all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (1:16-17).

In an attempt to support their Jesus-creature doctrine, those at the Watchtower Society have polluted Paul’s words in their NWT by adding the word “other” four times with brackets into this passage, saying, “by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth...” .and that “...All [other] things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist...” Yes, they have corrupted the words of the God they profess to serve.

“FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION”

What evidence has the Watchtower Society presented to prove the Son of God was created? Consider the following statement from its publication, *What Does the Bible Really Teach*?

“He is called ‘the firstborn of all creation,’ for he was God’s first creation” (2005, p. 41). The declaration that “firstborn of all creation” means Jesus was created first is nothing more than an assertion. When used in reference to literal birth, the word certainly implies an order in time, being the first to exit the womb, but in the case of Jesus being called the “firstborn,” it is more than apparent that the term is not used in such a literal form, just as the term “firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18) does not imply literal birth from death, for such is a senseless notion.

In truth, “firstborn” is a title of preeminence. Throughout man’s history, as in the Bible, the “firstborn” male was highest in rank among his siblings and had the “birthright” (1 Ch. 5:1; Gen. 29:26; 43:33; 48:18; Deut. 21:1); thus the word “firstborn” became associated with superiority and being the highest of honor. When used in this sense, it no longer has reference to chronology or birth, but rather to rank.

For example, in Psalms 89:27, God says He will make David His “firstborn.” How would God make David the “firstborn” if he was already in existence? If he had already been born? In fact, David was the youngest of many sons (1 Sam. 16:11-13). God would make David the “firstborn” by exalting his position in honor while being King. This is exactly what God means, for He

qualifies “firstborn” with, “higher than the kings of the earth.” The whole context concerns the promotion of David through Jehovah’s blessings.

As stated before, Jesus is called the “firstborn from the dead,” though He was not the first to be resurrected from death. Lazarus and the ruler’s daughter had previously been raised by Christ (John 11; Mark 5:35-42), and God raised a child back to life in the time of Elijah (1 Kings 17:21-22). Rather it means that among all who have died, Jesus is superior to them all-being the greatest among the dead as well as the living. He is the “Lord both of the dead and living” (Rom. 14:9), so that “in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18).

There is an aspect of Jesus resurrection in which He is chronologically first-the first to rise from the dead to never die again (Rev. 1:8), but in this He is spoken of as the “first fruits” (1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

The Greek language (in which the New Testament was originally written) had a word for “created,” as seen throughout the New Testament (Mark 13:19; 1 Cor. 11:9; Eph. 2:10; Eph. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:3, etc.), but it is not used for Christ.

“THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD”

The Watchtower says: “There is something else that makes this Son special. He is the only-begotten Son.” (John 3:16) This means that Jesus is the only one directly created by God” (2005, p.41).

First they should consider that in Hebrews 11:17, Isaac is called Abraham’s “only begotten,” but Abraham actually had other children (Gen. 16:4ff). Isaac was the “only begotten” in the sense of having a unique and special relationship to Abraham, being the only son of his marriage with Sarah and the son born of promise (Heb. 11:17). So, a son can be the “only begotten” by means of having an exclusive relation to his father, which Jesus certainly does, sharing the divine nature with God. While all Christians are “sons” of God (Rom. 8:14), they do not have the same kinship with the Father as Jesus, in whom dwells “all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). Is there any other “son” of whom that is said? It is also said of Christ: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God..” (Phil. 2:6) Any other son in the “form of God”? The entire New Testament exhibits their inimitable union. (cf. John 1:1f, 18; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3, etc.)

More importantly, “only begotten” relates to the connection between Jesus and Jehovah after Jesus

became flesh:

“And the angel answered and said unto [Mary], The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

The eternal Jesus became flesh, being born of a virgin woman by the Spirit of God, and thus, He is the “Son” of God, being deity in the flesh. Note that John refers to Jesus as the “only begotten” after speaking of Him being “made flesh” (John 1:14), and it is in Him that “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

To say that Jesus being called the “only begotten” necessarily implies He was created by God is a statement they offer without support, and in fact contradicts a multitude of Biblical testimony.

“THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD”

One of the various appellations self-applied by Jesus in the book of Revelation is “the beginning of the creation of God.” In harmony with the immediate and overall context of the Bible, this is to be understood to mean He was the cause of the creation. Everything began in Him; thus he is “the beginning.” However, the Watchtower presents it as proof that Jesus was the first created: “... [Jesus] was “the beginning of God’s creation.” (Revelation 3:14, RS, Catholic edition). “Beginning” [Greek, ar-khe’] cannot rightly be interpreted to mean that Jesus was the ‘beginner’ of God’s creation. In his Bible writings, John uses various forms of the Greek word ar-khe’ more than 20 times, and these always have the common meaning of “beginning.” Yes, Jesus was created by God as the beginning of God’s invisible creations” (http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/article_05.htm).

Actually, John uses the word “beginning” (as in other instances of Jesus’ self-designations in Revelation, but in chapter twenty-one, Jesus not only calls Himself the “beginning,” but also “the end” (v.6). It doesn’t take long to see the dilemma the Watchtower faces. If “beginning” means first in chronological order of creation, then to be consistent, “end” would mean last in chronological order of creation. Thus, according to their reasoning, Jesus is the first created and the last created, leaving Him as the only created! You and I don’t exist! The error of their doctrine is abundantly manifest. “Beginning and end,” “the Amen” (3:14), Alpha and Omega” (21:6), and the “Faithful and True Witness (3:14),” are all titles expressing the credentials of Jesus’ deity, and deity is necessarily eternal, both past and future.

The beginning of the creation of God” of Revelation 3:14 is equivalent to “firstborn of all creation” of Colossians 1:15, and both contexts deal with the superiority of Christ.

PROVERBS 8

In Proverbs chapter eight, wisdom is personified, written as speaking in the first person, and the “witnesses,” as well as others, believe it is meant to be Jesus Himself speaking. In verse twenty-two, some translations speak of wisdom as “created” by Jehovah. The Watchtower says:

“Notice how closely those references to the origin of Jesus correlate with expressions uttered by the figurative “Wisdom” in the Bible book of Proverbs: “Yahweh created me, first-fruits of his fashioning, before the oldest of his works. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I came to birth; before he had made the earth, the countryside, and the first elements of the world. Proverbs 8:12, 22, 25, 26, NJB” (http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/article_05.htm)

It is not a stretch to say that much in Proverbs alludes to Jesus, but some things must be understood: 1) Sure there are similarities between the language describing wisdom and Jesus’ work as creator; why wouldn’t there be? Jesus and Jehovah used wisdom in creating the universe. Is it not called intelligent design? Jesus, as the creator of all things, used intelligence to design it all. It could very well be the case that Solomon is just personifying wisdom for effect, and it is not necessarily meant to be Jesus. Evidence for this is seen in the fact that wisdom is spoken of in the feminine sense in the first verses (“her voice”; “she standeth”; “she crieth”). Nevertheless, it is sure that the language is very harmonious to that of the Son of God, but again, no doubt it would be, because Jesus is the creator.

2) The word translated as “created” (Hebrew-qa^{na}h) is rendered “possessed” in many versions, such as the King James, and this is surely one of its meanings. The word is not always strictly the idea of “creating” or bringing something from nonexistence into existence. The same Hebrew word is found in Jeremiah 32:15, where it says, “Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.”

According to the context, just as Jeremiah bought the field from his cousin Hanameel (v. 7ff), the fields of the lands that had been taken under control by Babylon would be owned again by Israel once they were to take the lands back into “possession.”

3) Whichever way they want to take it, the Watchtower does not help itself here, because in Proverbs 8:23, “wisdom” is said to have been “set up from everlasting.”

(KJV) As Jehovah has never been without wisdom, so He has never been without Jesus.

Ultimately, while Jesus Christ is not a created being, the Jesus of the Watchtower Society is. They have created a different Jesus. Their Jesus is the archangel Michael (Watchtower, April 1, 2010 p. 19). He is neither prayed to nor worshipped (Watchtower, July 15, 1996; November 1, 1964). Doubtless their Jesus is not the real Jesus. The true Jesus is deity, having eternal past and eternal future. Glory and honor to His name, and to the Father through Him.

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 NEW YEARS MEETING continued from page two

these meeting where they can meet other Christian young people who will help them as they face the challenges of life. At these meetings friendships are formed that last a lifetime. It is the firm conviction of this writer, that the Lord intends for His people to marry “only in the Lord.” In some congregations there is a shortage of young people, making it difficult for those seeking a mate to find someone suitable to date or eventually marry. Only the Lord knows how many married people among us today, met their future companion at one of these meetings. To those of us who have grown old, it is gratifying to look back over the years and think of all the people who have touched our lives, many of whom we met at the fourth of July or new year meeting. Some of our children have benefitted by attending these meetings just as we did. I well remember when but a youth my Mother took me to Sulphur, Oklahoma to the fourth of July meeting. We arrived by car with others at night. When we reached the old tabernacle several were bedded down on the benches. We spent the rest of the night and the next day enjoyed the services with everyone else. Since that early experience I still get excited when that time of the year arrives. And so it goes, on and on, generation after generation, we have been privileged to meet and profit from being together at these great meetings. Why not make your plans to attend such a meeting this year. You will never regret it.

Announcements

**TELEVISION PROGRAMS
 BY KEVIN PRESLEY**

This is to inform those interested that brother Kevin Presley is planning to begin producing, hopefully in the near future, his Let The Bible Speak television programs. Some of you are familiar with the quality of these telecasts from having seen or used

them in the past. Currently Ft. Smith, AR and West Monroe, LA continue to show them each Sunday. However, more programs with new material are needed, hence Brother Presley has agreed to once again begin production. If you would be interested in using these telecasts please get in touch with Kevin as soon as possible. His powerful style of preaching and his dedication to truth are sorely needed today by those who are lost in sin. You may contact Kevin at the following address. Please let him know of your interest. Kevin Presley 334-618-1550.

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INTERNET RESOURCES

As technology changes new avenues for presenting the gospel are constantly appearing. Over the past few years some of our brethren have undertaken the task of building and maintaining websites to propagate the Word. However, many of our own may not be aware of these wonderful resources. Here are a few you may find helpful:

ChristianResearcher.com is a site I started last year to promote the study of God’s word. Through this site you can find articles on a variety of subjects, audio sermons, video files, free downloadable books and resources, a downloadable correspondence course, helpful book reviews, conservative religious books for purchase, and links to a number of other brotherhood websites. The site is updated frequently, has a smartphone version for people on the go as well as a facebook page so members can keep up with updates.

Christianlandmark.com is maintained by Brother Bart Shaw, Shahe Gergian, and Clint Defrance. These brethren run a professional quality site with tons of helpful materials and resources. This site offers written articles on a variety of subjects by a number of faithful preachers, audio sermons by various preachers, video recorded sermons, and much more. This site also offers a facebook page.

WilloftheLord.com is operated by my father George Battey. There you can find articles on numerous subjects, pdf versions of old books, back issues of the OPA in pdf format, and a number of other helpful resources. Over the past few years dad has had a number of “Open Bible Studies” where a denominational preacher is invited to speak on a certain subject and dad presents the other side of the issue. These studies have been recorded in audio format and can be downloaded free of charge on this website. These discussions are great study tools for examining both sides of an issue.

LettheBibleSpeak.com provides audio, video, and manuscript versions of all the sermons Brother Brett Hickey delivers on the television program. Brother Brett’s program has been running for several years now in a number of markets and this site is loaded with helpful material on a variety of topics that can easily be downloaded and shared with friends, family members, or potential leads.

Cepsn.org is now the online home of the Christian Expositor. Brother Nate Bibens and Brad Shockley. On this site you will find helpful sermon outlines, and articles for the pages of the Expositor.

Last but not least: OldPathsAdvocate.org The Old Paths Advocate has deep roots in our brotherhood and helps to remind us of our past as well as prepare us for the future. The OPA used to circulate only by mail, but is now able to reach all over the world instantly and provide more than a monthly issue. The web site not only offers a digital version of its paper, it also offers articles, audio sermons, back issues, biographies, Facebook page, and much more. Be sure to get acquainted with this new version of an old friend.

These are just a few of the helpful sites that have been created by our brethren. Through them people from all corners of the earth are hearing the gospel proclaimed. If you are not familiar with any of these sites be sure to check them out, utilize their resources, and share them with others.

Thanks to all the brethren who labor in these works and others. May God bless the Kingdom and bless the efforts of faithful brethren in spreading the Good News. Nathan Battey nathanbattey@gmail.com

Our Departed

LOWERY- Bro. Griffin Lowery Jr. departed this life on September 27, 2013. Born in 1934, Griffin lived a long and storied life of 79 years. It is difficult to think of the churches in southeast Alabama without "Gruff" coming to mind. He spent most of his life living in the Lowery community and was well-known and loved. Griffin was a dedicated follower of Christ, putting the Lord's cause first. He spent countless hours preparing lessons, visiting the sick, and travelling to support gospel meetings. In fact, I know of no one who drove any further and dedicated more of their time and money to support the preaching of the gospel in this area. Griffin enjoyed the simple pleasures of life but he especially loved to talk about the Lord and His word. Rarely did I preach a sermon when Griffin was present but that he would stop at the back door and talk a little while about a point or something he had thought of during the lesson. He leaves a great void in the old Lowery congregation and in this area. Griffin leaves behind a faithful and devoted wife of many years, Sybil; daughter-in-law, Cindy Lowery; and two grandchildren, Josh and Katie. He was preceded in death by his only son, Lowell, who was suddenly taken a few years ago when he suffered a heart attack. This was a crushing loss for Griffin and Sybil and all of their family. Griffin could always tell you how many days it had been since Lowell was taken. Our hope is in Christ and thus in that glad reunion where goodbyes will never again be spoken. A large crowd gathered as Griffin's body was laid to rest in the Lowery cemetery. It was my honor to speak about the life of this good and memorable man. - Kevin Presley

BYRD- Known by friends of old as D. J., which stood for Dow Jr. and by more recent acquaintances as "Dee" passed

from his earthly existence, Monday, December 16, 2013, at the age of 78 years, 4 months and 28 days after a long and trying time with cancer, which entailed and required long, trying and difficult radiation treatments which may have prolonged his life, but, no doubt which also hastened his death. He faced all of this with tremendous faith and courage, which proved to be an inspiration to all who watched as his life ebbed away. D. J. was born on July 18 in 1935 to Gilbert Dow Byrd and Ethel Ann (Knutson) Byrd. He had six siblings Buster, Lloyd, Opal, Iva Jo, Barbara and Mona Sue Elliott. His parents and 5 of his siblings preceded him in death, only Mona Sue remains. D.J. and Rheba Ellen (Thornton) were married on July 9, 1955. To this union two children were born, Kevin of Bethany, OK. And Nancy Riley of Austin, TX., all of which remain to grieve his passing, along with four Grandchildren and their spouses, also, three great granddaughters, as well as numerous nieces and nephews. D. J. was my brother-in-law, friend and brother in Christ whom I loved as if he were my brother in the flesh. He obeyed the gospel at a young age, which I questioned him about one time, and he stated that he thought Brother Tom, my father Tom E. Smith baptized him. At the time of his death, he was a faithful leader in the church at Davis, OK. where he was much loved and appreciated for his work sake. He was well known throughout the brotherhood, since he drove far and wide to attend Gospel Meetings, for he loved Gospel preachers and good, sound gospel preaching. It was to his credit that I counted some eight or so preachers at his funeral service. His wife, Rheba told me that D. J. wanted me to preach his funeral, if I felt able. I informed her that I did not covet doing so, but if that was what he wanted I would do my best to oblige. It was a beautiful service attended by family, friends, acquaintances and brothers and sisters in Christ. Bro. Don Pruitt capably led congregational singing, and Paul Melton officiated at the grave site. We truly regret having to say good-bye to this great man, but he had to meet his appointment with death, and then the judgment, but, because of his great and enduring faith, we truly believe that we shall see him again in heaven, and that the great reunion of the saints will probably not be too long. My daughter Connie, Sons, Dale and Randall their wives Sabrina and Tammy along with two granddaughters Kallie and Carlee transported and accompanied me there, for which I am very thankful. My prayer is that God will bless, Rheba, his wife, Kevin, Nancy his children as well as the grandchildren and that they will dedicate their lives to the Lord, whom he loved and served so faithfully, being to them a great example Clarence A. Smith

Field Reports

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com Dec. 31- At this writing it is New Year's Eve and 2014 will soon be here. A new year always brings with it excitement, hope, and future challenges to be met. I have a busy meeting schedule planned for the upcoming year. Here is the first part of that schedule: March 7-16 at Manteca, CA, April 2-6 at the Leawood Village congregation in Joplin, MO, and May 2-4 at Montreal, MO. In future reports, I will list

my other meetings at the appropriate time. The work here at Jamesville continues on. We had a few setbacks last year, but we are faithfully holding forth the banner of Christ and are at peace. We have two meetings scheduled for 2014- Kevin Presley will be with us in the Spring and Bruce Roebuck is coming in the Fall. Let's all "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14) in 2014. If this should be the year of our Lord's return, surely we want to be found faithfully proclaiming His word!

Clint De France, 5021 Taft Blvd. #3211, Wichita Falls, TX - In November I ended my last quarter of meetings and believe this to have been a beneficial period in my work. Since Labor Day I have been to Lodi, CA where I enjoyed the hospitality of Alan and Tonya Bonifay and the Christians there. We had a very nice meeting with good crowds throughout most of it. Many preachers and church leaders and especially many young people were in attendance. Jimmy Cating and I held a mission meeting in Archer City, TX with some community interest; we hope perhaps more good may eventually develop from that work. In October I went to Ada, OK and the Chestnut Ridge congregation in Mt. Vernon, KY. It was my first time to both of those congregations and I thoroughly enjoy the meetings. Both were exceptionally well attended by community visitors and brethren of other areas. It was a special pleasure to have Joe Hisle and Carl Johnson with their families at the meeting in Ada. They have both been inspirations and heroes of the Faith to me since I was a little boy. My last meeting for the year was at the Northside congregation in Springfield, MO. The crowds were outstanding; community interest was worthy of report, having 17 community visitors in one night from the denominations. It was the efforts of the local brethren inviting their friends that made this happen. I enjoyed staying in the home of Daniel and Supryia May. The elders at that congregation are to be highly commended for their work in shepherding the flock. We look forward to the Grapevine Preacher Study, the Dothan, AL New Year Meeting and regular gospel meetings beginning again in February of next year at 21st Street in OKC, OK (Feb. 7-9) and Broken Arrow, OK (Feb. 12-16) and Temple, GA (Feb. 27 - March 2). The work continues to be successful here at home.

Richard De Gough 1809 Flora Vista Dr. Hughson, California E-Mail--- rdegough@gmail.com Ph. 209-883-4168. I hope and pray this year finds brethren all over the world in good health and standing fast in the faith. We are at peace in Turlock church and doing what we can to help support gospel preachers in other countries such as the Philippines and Tanzania. We certainly have faithful men who are preaching the gospel, and, committing it to faithful men that come after them to teach others also. Brethren, the kingdom is spreading to many more areas of the world. God be thanked and glorified by these good works. I had to cancel my weekend meeting in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. There were conditions developed that required my attention at home. It was with sadness

and regret I had to do this. I sincerely appreciated the invitation to go there by the brethren. As a brotherhood we have a responsibility to continue contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. There seems to be a departing from the faith by many. More conflicts have to be waged for truth than we realize. The devil is loose and "evil seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived". This is sad but so true. It takes a daily examining of ourselves whether we be in the faith, and then remain faithful. May God bless the brotherhood in every way possible.

Darrell Crawford, 208 E Baldwin Rd Unit S Panama City, Fl. 32405 bugz1955@hotmail.com. We hope that everyone had a blessed and happy New Years. We were able to attend the Alabama New Years Meeting at Dothan, Al. this past year. Brother Ronny Wade and Kevin Presley did an outstanding job in conducting the meeting as usual. The Dothan congregation also did a great job in making the meeting a success. We had several visitors from here in Panama City come with us to the meeting, they really enjoyed it. There was also a digressive preacher we know in Dothan came two nights and enjoyed it as well. The Lord has blessed us greatly in the past few months here at Michigan Ave. We have 4 brethren, two sisters and two brothers have taken their stand with the truth in the last 4-5 months, with more on the horizon we believe. The others are coming on Lords day morning and afternoon. Two have said that they had been out of church for quite some time and are ready to get back in church, and are here to stay. We are trying to help them see the truth and hopefully, they will take their stand soon as well. The new brethren are great workers for the Lord and are tireless in their service to the Lord. They are working inviting others to the services and encouraging others to come to the services at Michigan Ave. We will Lord willing be doing a booth at the Martin Luther King festival in downtown Panama City on Feb. 20. We also plan Lord willing to resume the Friday Fest monthly festival in Downtown Panama City beginning in February. Last year was not a good year, we had health issues and weather issues that kept us from doing the Friday Fest every month, but Lord willing, this year will be a better year. Perhaps we can get some studies from this and see more souls saved while there is yet time. We have started Wed. night services here, on the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Wed. nights every month. For the winter months we will meet at 6:30 pm and in the summer months at 7:00 pm. We continue to solicit your prayers for the work here that our Lord will bless our efforts, and for our health issues as well. I continue to have breathing issues, the machine I have doesn't seem to be working properly although we are told it is set properly and is working as it should. Thanks again for all your prayers and support, and encouragement for the work here, it is finally paying off as the Lord said "His word would not return to him void!" May we all hold to the Old paths and may the Lord bless His church everywhere.

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THE BACK PAGE...

STUMBLING BLOCK AND LAUGHINGSTOCK?

By CARL M. JOHNSON

A new controversy has developed within the United Methodist Church (UMC) over the Communion that one church official describes as a “stumbling block and laughingstock.” Historically, there have been many controversies associated with the Communion, but in today’s electronic age the latest controversy was probably inevitable.

“World Communion Sunday” is a celebration observed by several denominations on the first Sunday of every October. It is intended to promote unity and ecumenical cooperation across denominational lines. The tradition originated in the Shadyside Presbyterian Church in 1933, and has subsequently spread to other denominations including the UMC. Shortly before World Communion Sunday in 2013, a group of UMC leaders warned of a significant threat to the unity of this movement—the practice of offering Communion online (Christianity Today, Dec. p. 20).

Daniel Wilson, a UMC preacher in Concord, North Carolina, announced he would launch a “virtual campus” complete with streaming services, webcam Bible study, counseling via live chat and a dedicated online pastor. The church also planned for these virtual users to be able to take Communion at home while it is being offered during services in the church building. While viewing the services online, viewers can simply “grab some grape juice and any bread or crackers in the house, and consume them after the pastor, in the sanctuary, blesses the juice and bread as representing the blood and body of Christ” (WSJ.com).

LifeChurch.tv posted in a blog that bread or a cracker and wine or Kool-Aid would be appropriate for its online Communion. However, UMC’s Wilson cautions, “We do not want to water it down so much that people use Goldfish crackers and apple juice.”

In light of declining church attendance (UMC membership in the USA declined 9% from 2000 to 2010) some see technologies as a potential fix. Wilson’s associate Andy Langford says, “The practice could help make Christianity more accessible, especially to young people who read the Bible on an app, if at all. We believe God is not bound by space and time, and that when we bless the bread and cup in one place, if there are others who are worshipping with us, God will bless that bread and cup wherever they are. The way we operate now, if you want to receive Communion, you have to come to church sometime between the hours of 9 and 12 on Sunday morning. I don’t think there’s any other institution in our country that can survive on that kind of business model” (WSJ.com).

I have been surprised, however, at the backlash UMC has received over Wilson and Langford’s innovative proposal. Roman Catholic blogger Larry Roach expresses the sentiment of many, “Isn’t this taking things a bit too far? How much can you trivialize what should be sacred?”

In fact, UMC has received so many critical emails from liberal denominations that are a part of the ecumenical movement that it declared a moratorium (suspension of the practice) of online Communion, and called for a further study of the subject. A spokesman for the church hierarchy said the church understands Communion to be celebrated “within a physically gathered community.”

The church spokesman is actually correct on this point. God has given the church a command to assemble upon the first day of each week for corporate worship, and we are commanded not to forsake that practice. In that assembly God orders us to take up a collection for needy saints and for financing the work of the church, to teach, sing, pray, and observe the Communion (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14; 1 Cor. 11:18-29; Acts 20:7). In reference to the Communion Paul adds, “For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26). In other words, the practice of local Christians assembling together in one place at the same time to observe the Communion is a practice that is to be continued until the Lord comes again. It follows, therefore, that we are not at liberty to forsake that practice in favor of celebrating the Communion online from some remote location.

Another UMC church spokesman in favor of the moratorium said that if the church endorses online Communion, “we would become not only a stumbling block (to ecumenical unity) but also a laughingstock” (Christianity Today 20).

Apparently some of our own brethren who pushed acceptance of individual communion cups in the early 1900s did not have the same concerns for our well-being. The late G.C. Brewer of Chattanooga, Tennessee boasted, “I think I was the first preacher to advocate the use of the individual communion cup... I was fought both privately and publicly and several brethren took me to task and called me digressive” (Forty Years on the Firing Line XII). The militant Brewer, however, pushed the innovation relentlessly, gained support from others, and divided churches all over the brotherhood. While the innovation is not a laughingstock, it has been a stumbling block to unity within the Lord’s church now for almost a century. cmjthebackpage@gmail.com