

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

DOES THE BIBLE TEACH THE PRINCIPLE OF “GUILT BY ASSOCIATION”?

DUB MCCLISH

Introduction

Is it valid for voters to question candidates for the office of President of the United States about their close associates? In the 2008 presidential campaign this question came to the fore, especially concerning Barack Obama. His twenty-year membership in the extreme racist and anti-American Jeremiah Wright’s Chicago church and his defense of Wright have raised the guilt-by-association issue. Additionally, Obama’s continued close and amicable relationship with William Ayers, the impenitent early-1970s radical Weather Underground Organization terrorist, further fueled the guilt-by-association charge. Political conservatives argue that such favorable associations imply agreement with the convictions and behavior of said associates and therefore culpability for the same. Predictably, liberal politicians jumped to Obama’s defense, denying the viability of the guilt-by-association principle.

Is there such a thing as “guilt by association”? Some brethren have for years answered with a firm, “No,” denying any Scriptural basis for it and classifying it as unfair, prejudicial, and unjustified. Others have just as boldly and staunchly replied, “Yes,” arguing that the Scriptures teach the principle, both explicitly and implicitly.

Let us define the terms of the disputed principle:

- “Guilt”: A noun indicating accountability or responsi-

bility for an offense, blameworthiness for wrongdoing, or error in morals, doctrine, or practice.

- “By”: A preposition indicating the means through which an action, state, or situation occurs.
- “Association”: A relationship between two or more persons or entities.

Given the foregoing definitions, is one to be held accountable for the sins/errors of his associates? Does one incur guilt by association?

Various Usages of Guilt by Association

Guilt by association is the name of a logical fallacy by which one attempts to discredit a doctrine or practice by associating it with one who is in disfavor. To argue that fellowship with denominational churches is sinful because Max Lucado engages in such demonstrates this fallacy. Another illustration of this fallacy would be the assertion that the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is sinful because the apostate North Richland Hills Church of Christ near Forth Worth, Texas, employs them. The practices in both cases are sinful, but not because of who practices or is associated with them. These and other wrong practices are wrong because the Bible forbids them or does not authorize them, either implicitly or explicitly. Our examination of “guilt by association” does not pertain to this logical fallacy.

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Editorial...

WHO IS GOING TO APOLOGIZE TO BARRY GRIDER?

Some of our readers may not know that in mid-September of this year bro. Barry Grider resigned as the preacher for the Forest Hill – Irene (hereafter FH) Church of Christ in Memphis, TN, effective at the close of 2009. FH is the congregation that oversees the work of The Memphis School of Preaching (hereafter MSOP). Grider also served on the faculty of the MSOP. Following his graduation from the MSOP he served as the “youth minister,” or whatever they call that position, with the old Knight Arnold Road congregation before it moved to its present meeting place at FH.

We know how much bro. Grider longed for and earnestly desired to be the preacher for FH. He made no secret of that, telling people when he left the Southwest (hereafter SW) Church of Christ, Austin, TX several years ago to preach for FH that he would give up about anything to be the preacher for FH. But, recently Grider decided it was time for him to leave the FH pulpit and fulltime preaching in order to enter the funeral business. However, he and his family will remain members of FH. But now comes the following question: *Is there more than meets the eye regarding Grider's decision to exchange the FH pulpit for a funeral director's work?*

Revisiting Dub McClish's Article in the April 2009 CFTF

In his article, “Is This What They Mean by Balance?,” bro. Dub McClish examined a Grider article from the Feb. 19, 2009, FH bulletin, *The Forest Hill News*, entitled “I Got Used to It.” (Bro. McClish's article also appears in the September 2009 *Defender*, a longtime publication of the Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, FL, editor, Michael Hatcher). In his article McClish made it clear that much in Grider's article is good, but he also pointed out: “It is evident from his article that he has ‘got used to’ some things that he at one time had not ‘got used to’ and that he did not learn to ‘get used to’ from either the New Testament or from his instructors at MSOP several years ago.” In his article Grider tells us that we should get used to such songs as “Sweet, Sweet Spirit.” McClish points out that Grider “sees no difference between praising God **for** the Holy Spirit (as in “Hallelujah, Thine the Glory”) and in **directly addressing** the Spirit and praying **to** Him for His direct influence upon us (as in “Sweet, Sweet Spirit”)” [McClish's bold]. McClish then points out that Grider

“specifically denies some of the principles I affirmed and even named some of the same songs I used as illustrations...” in his 2007 Bellview Lectureship chapter, “Building up the Church Through Singing.” McClish then exposes Grider for creating “a straw man of those ‘resistant to any kind of change’ and condescendingly judges them to be of ‘weak faith’.” Then McClish frankly pointed out “that some of us are not ‘resistant to any kind of change,’ but that some of us are still resistant to certain kinds of change, such as singing a Pentecostal song directed to the Holy Spirit demonstrates.”

Tyler Young’s Article

McClish then turned his attention to what he calls an “even more telling” article than Grider’s. It is an article by bro. Tyler Young, the present preacher for the North Walnut and Rusk Church of Christ, Roanoke, TX. Grider included Young’s article immediately following his own article, prefacing it with “Binding where God Has Not” and “the following editor’s note: ‘The following article is an excerpt of material prepared by brother Young for the 2008 Lubbock Lectureship.’” However, McClish informs us “that bro. Tommy Hicks, Lubbock Lectures Director had *edited this material from Young’s MS because of sore disagreement with it*” (McClish’s italics). McClish continued his article with the following information bearing on Young’s article, but omitted by Grider.

In spite of knowing of this disagreement, Young impudently delivered the excised passages orally at the lectureship anyway, much to the chagrin of Hicks and his elders. His doing so provoked a public rebuke by Hicks and an immediate stream of questions from various ones who heard the speech. Hicks’s elders were so concerned about this lecture that they had it removed in its entirety from the recordings so that no one who heard them could infer that the Southside church endorsed Young’s comments.

As in Grider’s article, there is much in Young’s essay with which all faithful brethren will agree. However, in his comments (endorsed by Grider, but rejected by Hicks, remember), he questions whether we should have fellowship concerns about various practices that faithful brethren must question seriously. According to Young, such things as using the NIV for teaching and preaching, dismissing Sunday evening worship in favor of small group meetings or for the Super Bowl, serving coffee and doughnuts in Bible classes, or missing a meeting of the church to compete in a sporting event should not be considered signs of liberalism and should not affect fellowship. Space forbids further elaboration, but these comments indicate the “flavor” of the article. I applaud brother Hicks and the Southside elders for refusing to publish and endorse this material. I encourage readers to read the entire article.

The point just here is that Grider gave this article his imprimatur; *he is in full agreement with it*. However, he was not through. Immediately following the Young article, he printed an article that has been around for many years, titled “I Drew My Circle Again.” It mocks the concept of recognizing fellowship restrictions. While the Lord’s people should not be self-righteously judgmental, this little ditty implies that one should make no judgments at all. Of course, the only justifiable basis anyone has for drawing lines of fellowship, whether circular, triangular, square, rectangular or any other shape, is where the Lord has drawn them in His Word. I kindly suggest to brother Grider that he needs to draw that circle yet again. Over the past almost four years, it is obvious that he has considerably enlarged his circle of late. It seems to be much larger now than it was four or five years ago, and it seems to be getting larger all the time. It is certainly larger than the Lord’s “circle” (Rom. 16:17–18; Eph. 5:11; Tit. 3:10; 2 John 9–11).

The only ones I have seen publish this little “Circle” piece over the years are folks who are much more broadminded than the Lord, mostly rank liberals and denominationalists. A quick Internet search located the “Circle” treatise on the Websites of a Christadelphian, a Nazarene, two Baptists, and three other churches of Christ. Ironically, one of them is the liberal Germantown, Tennessee, congregation, which is “just around the corner” from FH/MSOP, with which they have no fellowship. I assume that Grider knew exactly what he was doing when he printed the “Circle” note.

WHAT WILL THE FOREST HILL ELDERS DO?

In light of the above, what will the FH elders do? Do they agree with and stand behind their preacher in these articles? If they do, they have seriously altered their views concerning some of the things their preacher either said in his article, endorsed in Young’s article, and/or implied in the “Circle” article. Is this what they mean by *balance*?

I had the privilege of delivering the 1998 MSOP graduation address. In my remarks, I addressed not only the students. I also specifically cautioned and reminded the FH elders to be vigilant for any drifting in their convictions and/or direction, noting that if brethren began seeing signs of compromise in them, it would destroy the school’s and the congregation’s great influence for good. They, as well as the faculty, expressed great appreciation for my remarks at the time. (The tape of that speech is probably still stuck away in some dark and forgotten corner of a cabinet in the FH media room, unless someone has remembered [since mid-2005] to destroy it.)

Till the FH elders issue a disclaimer statement relative to the Grider/Young article? If they do not, surely, many are going to have grave concerns about their (and MSOP’s) implied endorsement of it and about their sincerity and

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Another facet of “guilt by association” is that wherein one actually may be led to commit a sin or embrace an error through the influence of his associates. Paul referred to this danger concerning the incestuous brother whom the Corinthian church was tolerating among them. He commanded them to purge him from their fellowship, stating the principle, “**A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump**” (1 Cor. 5:6). He stated it again in the same letter: “**Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals**” (15:33). While multitudes over the centuries have been led to engage in evil and/or erroneous behavior through the influence of their companions, this is not the “guilt by association” with which we are concerned in this study.

The guilt by association which is the focal point of this essay, is that which may or may not be incurred merely as a result of one’s favorable association with one who is in error or sin. Does one, though not personally engaging in the sinful practices or holding the errors of his associates, share in the guilt of said sinners by extending fellowship and encouragement to or defense or endorsement of such persons?

Mere Association Does Not Necessarily Imply Endorsement

It is abundantly clear from our Lord’s behavior that association alone does not imply agreement with or endorsement of one’s associates. He ate with and otherwise associated with sinners (e.g., Mat. 9:10–13; Luke 15:1; John 4:4–42), but such associations never involved Him in their sins or errors (Heb. 4:15). Paul consistently preached in the synagogues (e.g., Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1; et al.), not in order to endorse the Jews’ doctrine and practice, but to refute, correct, and convert. None can fairly accuse him of associating with the Jews in these cases in such a way as to be guilty of their errors. Let us test this principle by considering some other associations.

Associations With Those Who Are Not Christians

We cannot avoid all “association” with sinners, including those who are guilty of immorality, theft, religious error, or other sins, without literally becoming hermits. We come in contact with such folk as we work, shop, travel, attend school, and/or eat in public places, with no means of even knowing of their sins. Paul stated the simple and obvious fact that to avoid “**keeping company**” with all such would require us to “**go out of the world**” (1 Cor. 5:9–10). Again, we see from the above that merely being in the company of those of the world does not imply complicity with their sins. (However, this fact in no way justifies a Christian to choose people of worldly thinking and behavior as his or her closest friends and companions, as already noted [1 Cor. 15:33].)

Associations With Brethren in One’s Local Congregation

In the immediate context of the foregoing passage, Paul forbade God’s people to “**keep company**” with impenitent brethren (including eating with them):

But as it is, I wrote unto you not to keep company, if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat (v. 11, emph. DM).

Paul gave this order, at least in part, to prevent any hint of further encouragement or endorsement of the brother’s sin, which encouragement had formerly characterized the Corinthian saints (vv. 2–6). The Scriptural proscription of association with the sinful brother is not absolute, however. Concerning those from whom the church must withdraw its fellowship, Paul instructed the Thessalonian church:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us.... And if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (2 The. 3:6, 14–15, emph. DM).

The prescribed treatment of the sinful person in verse 15 implies at least some communication, if not association, in order to admonish (i.e., warn of wrongdoing) the erring brother or sister to repent. From the foregoing material it is clear that the mere act of association with one in sin, in and of itself, does not make the innocent party culpable.

Associations With Those Outside of One’s Local Congregation

May one attend a religious assembly to hear for oneself a false teacher (whether or not he is a brother), so that he can perhaps learn better the way to expose and refute his errors? In 1961, two other brethren and I attended an Oral Roberts “Crusade” in Wichita Falls, Texas, specifically to observe and hear this reprobate so that we might better oppose his errors. Several years ago I attended a “Good Friday” service in the building of the First Baptist Church, sponsored by the local Ministerial Alliance in Denton, Texas. I specifically wanted to observe the actions and words of Don Browning (at the time, preacher for the liberal Singing Oaks Church of Christ in our city), who was a member of the Ministerial Alliance and was one of the speakers (along with men from six “other” local denominations) for the occasion. (I later exposed his participation in an article in the Pearl Street congregation’s bulletin, *The Edifier*.)

May a preacher accept an invitation to preach in a Gospel meeting or lectureship *in order to* confront error in the congregation or in one or more of the speakers? Both the Lord and Paul did this very thing, as earlier noted. (If one denies that one can do so without engaging in fellowship with error, one must oppose the participation of faithful brethren in religious debates.) Does one sin who speaks on a lectureship with one who is a false teacher or who may be a fornicator or a crook without correcting or exposing him, *not knowing he was such*? (In May 2005 I was one of several brethren who

spoke on the Gulf Coast Lectures in Portland, Texas, with brother Joseph Meador. It was subsequently revealed that he was *at that time* engaged in an adulterous relationship with another man's wife). Although there was "association" with those in sin or error in each of the aforementioned cases, there certainly was no participation in them.

The Scriptural Principle of "Guilt by Association"

While we may engage in associations with those in error and sin without becoming culpable with them (as demonstrated above), the Bible nonetheless emphatically sets forth the principle of "guilt by association" in certain circumstances. By this I mean that one may become guilty of the sin or error of his associates, even without personally teaching or practicing them. As we shall see, the determining factor is one's association with and approving behavior toward those in sin or error, *fully conscious of their errors*. Don Browning, mentioned above, well illustrates this circumstance. He consciously, knowingly participated with denominational heretics in such a way as to endorse and encourage them. He reinforced their contentment in their doctrinal and practical errors. *He thereby became a partaker* in their errors and sins. One becomes culpable in such cases because he is an accessory, accomplice, collaborator, and abettor to the one in error and to his sin or error. Criminal law has long acknowledged this principle because it is both logical and just to do so. On this basis the driver of the getaway car is as guilty of a crime as is his partner who robs the bank and shoots a teller in the process.

SOME APPLICABLE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURES

Numbers 16:26

Numbers 16 records the insurrection Korah, Dathan, and Abiram led against the authority of Moses, God's authorized spokesman and lawgiver. In response to their challenge, Moses warned those still associated with them: "**Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins**" (v. 26). Those who continued their association with these rebels would be subject to the judgments against them because such association implied concurrence in their rebellion. Even if some of the associates of these insurrectionists had not personally cried out against Moses, it is clear that to remain amicably associated with them would make them partakers in the guilt and consequent punishment of the rebels.

Ephesians 5:6–11

In Ephesians 5:6, Paul wrote of the "**sons of disobedience**" upon whom God's wrath would be administered. He then warned: "**Be not ye therefore partakers with them**" (v. 7). He further warned: "**And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them**" (v. 11). To have fellowship with such persons would cause those so doing to partake of their guilt and the

judgment against their sins. Such association would result in their guilt by association on two counts: (1) Fellowship with (i.e., partaking in) their errors and (2) failure to rebuke the one in error.

2 John 9–11

John declared the reality of guilt by association explicitly:

Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works.

In recent years, liberals in the church, clamoring to embrace advocates of almost every stripe of error in their fellowship, have conveniently redefined the teaching of Christ to mean the teaching *about* Christ (i.e., His Deity). However, respect for both the immediate and remote contexts of this passage demand its reference to the doctrine Christ taught, both personally and through others whom He inspired/authorized to teach His Word—the entire corpus of New Testament doctrine.

Giveth him greeting (biddeth him God speed, KJV) is from a word that means to rejoice with or wish one well. Thus one who encourages the teacher of doctrines contrary to "**the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints**" (Jude 3), becomes culpable for the errors of that teacher. An association/relationship that encourages or implies endorsement of a heretic renders one complicit in heresy. If no other passage relative to this subject could be found, this one is quite sufficient to make the case. The honest exegete cannot escape the conclusion that one who *willingly, knowingly, consciously* associates with individuals, congregations, or institutions so as, implicitly or explicitly, to encourage, endorse, or otherwise bid them Godspeed, is guilty of the error himself by said amicable association.

SOME PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THIS PRINCIPLE

Congregational Situations

- A family moves to a new location in a job change. They find a congregation that outwardly seems to be faithful and place membership. After a few months, they discover that it provides financial support for Dave Miller, whom they know to be a false teacher. Yet this family says nothing to the elders about their concerns, presents no evidence of his errors to them, and continues to contribute money, time, and efforts to the congregation. *This family is guilty by association.*
- A congregation Scripturally withdraws from a brother for divisive behavior, but two members refuse to honor the withdrawal, continuing to associate with him so as to defend him and approve of his sin. *They are guilty by*

association with him, and if they will not repent, they likewise should be withdrawn from.

- A brother receives an invitation to preach in a Gospel meeting where the preacher is a known impenitent fornicator/adulterer. The invited preacher does not hesitate to accept the invitation, making no attempt to restore the sinful brother either before he goes or while he is there. *The visiting preacher thereby becomes guilty by such association.*
- An employee of Apologetics Press is invited to deliver a series of lectures on apologetics and evidences in a congregation with which he is not familiar (although one could easily familiarize oneself with any congregation in advance). He learns upon arrival that the church is very liberal in doctrine and practice. He delivers his planned lessons without any discussion with the elders of their liberalism and without any other attempt to expose or correct the church's errors. *He is guilty by association.*
- A preacher is invited to preach in a Gospel meeting, and faithful brethren in the same city, learning about the meeting, warn him months in advance and provide dozens of pages of evidence of the church's digression. Said preacher ignores the warning and chooses not to read any of the documents faithful brethren sent him. He not only preaches in the meeting, but he publicly praises the elders and the preacher, bids them Godspeed, and accepts their accusations against the faithful brethren who issued the warnings. *He makes himself guilty of the errors of the liberal church by his encouragement of their errors.*

Brotherhood Situations

- Abilene Christian University invites a preacher generally known for his soundness in the faith to speak on its annual lectureship on some non-doctrinal subject. Faithful brethren beg him not to lend his influence to the school's apostasy and point out that the school is exploiting him as a "token conservative." Faithful brethren also point out that some unthinking brethren will interpret his participation as endorsement of the school. He insists on accepting the invitation on the premise that he "can preach the Gospel anywhere." He speaks on the subject assigned and does not expose any of the heresies of the faculty and administration. *He is guilty by association in his implied endorsement of those involved in grievous error.*
- A brother is invited to speak on the Lake Tahoe Family Encampment. Knowledgeable brethren warn him that the program is stacked with liberals and that its director has long been involved in liberalism. The brother ignores the warnings, accepts the invitation, and speaks the Truth on his assigned topic, but he says not a word

about the pervasive liberalism. In fact, he accepts an invitation to return the next year. *He is guilty by such association.*

- A brother is invited to speak on the Spiritual Sword Lectures, the Truth in Love Lectures, and the Polishing the Pulpit program, knowing that a well-documented impenitent false teacher and encourager of liberals will also be speaking, and he accepts the invitation in spite of these facts. He preaches the Truth on his topic, shakes hands with and cordially greets the erring brother, sits down and eats with him, and never raises an objection to his errors, publicly or privately. *Said speaker makes himself guilty by this kind of association.*
- The director of a school of preaching receives an invitation to speak on the Annual Schertz Lectures, Schertz, Texas, knowing that the local preacher has publicly taught gross error on marriage, divorce, and remarriage and that the Schertz congregation has been marked by faithful brethren for continuing to support its preacher. Said director attends, delivers his speech, never raises any question about the preacher's error, but instead publicly praises and bids Godspeed to the errant Schertz preacher. *Based on 2 John 10–11, the director participates in the guilt of the preacher.*
- A brother has in years past publicly opposed the elder reaffirmation/reconfirmation program as advocated and practiced by brother Dave Miller. With brother Miller's appointment as Executive Director of Apologetics Press (AP), this brother, a dedicated supporter of AP, faces a dilemma. Determined to continue said support, he first suggests that he is supporting only AP, not its head or any errors of which he may be guilty. However, he soon realizes the folly of this excuse. He knows if he continues to oppose Miller's errors he cannot support the institution of which he is the head. Likewise, he understands that if he continues to support AP he must cease his opposition to its director. He resolves his dilemma by continuing to support AP, by beginning to defend and endorse Miller, and by claiming to continue to oppose elder reaffirmation/reconfirmation "as the liberals practice it." *He has become implicitly guilty of brother Miller's errors, not to mention of flagrant hypocrisy, by such behavior.*

- A brother is invited to preach in a Gospel meeting at the Phillips Street congregation in Dyersburg, Tennessee, home of Online Academy of Bible Studies (OABS). He accepts, knowing that OABS abruptly broke its contract with the Spring, Texas, congregation to broadcast all of its 2006 lectureship (including its Open Forum) via the Internet. The contract was breached because the director of OABS apparently feared the lectureship would expose the errors of certain brethren who teach in OABS and/or some reputed to be "somewhat"

(Gal. 2:6). The invited preacher also knew that OABS unhesitatingly fulfilled its contract to broadcast the entire Memphis School of Preaching (MSOP) Lectureship (including its Open Forum) only a few weeks after the Spring Lectureship. He further knew that OABS continued to broadcast the morning worship periods of the Forest Hill congregation, home of MSOP. He preached in the meeting at Dyersburg, thereby giving his endorsement to OABS's squelching of the truth about grave brotherhood fellowship issues and its continued encouragement of those who were/are violating God's law concerning fellowship. *Said preacher was guilty by such association, according to 2 John 10–11.*

- A preacher conducts a TV program, and brethren who operate the Gospel Broadcasting Network (GBN) invite him to air his program on their network. This preacher has rightly been opposed to the elder reaffirmation/reconfirmation program and marriage error relating to "intent" as taught by brother Dave Miller. He knows that GBN fellowships, defends, and uses brother Miller in its programming. The preaching brother nevertheless joins with GBN and allows his program to become part of its broadcast schedule. *Regardless of his claims to the contrary and in spite of his disavowal of the Miller errors, he incurs guilt by such association.*

Conclusion

All of the above situations reflect actual and specific occurrences. Every one of them involves and demonstrates "guilt by association" as defined and described in 2 John 10–11. We had an expression in central Texas where, in some of my childhood years, my family raised goats: "You can't run with the goats without smelling like them." This earthy expression is not far from the principle John enunciated.

Tragically, many, if not most, of these men who are blatantly involved in "guilt by association" are seasoned men who know better. They are men who for years preached and practiced the Truth found in such passages as Ephesians 5:6–11 and 2 John 9–11. They would doubtless consistently and correctly apply these fellowship principles had Mac Deaver, Jeff Walling, or Rubel Shelly been appointed Executive Director of AP. However, by some means brother Dave Miller seems to have them and a host of others almost hypnotically in his thrall. A large number of brethren who know better refuse to call him to account for his errors, continuing to embrace him. In the minds of these brethren he *has done* no wrong, *is doing* no wrong, and perhaps, in their contorted view of matters, *can never* do any wrong. They bow before him almost as an idol and are quick to excoriate any who dare call attention to his errors and their encouragement of him.

So far as I know, these brethren who refuse to *practice* what the Bible teaches concerning fellowship still *orally teach* the Truth on the subject. However, I remind them one

and all that what we are teaching by our practice is far more powerful than the mere words we mouth. The adage is old, but true: "Actions speak louder than words." *Brethren who continue to teach the Truth orally concerning fellowship, but refuse to honor that teaching with their behavior, are, plainly put, hypocrites.*

For years liberals in the church have vociferously denied the existence of guilt by association. They have spoken of this Biblical principle with the utmost contempt, barely able to spit the words out, they so despised them. Will those who have set out on this latest "unity in diversity" gambit that has rallied around brother Dave Miller now join those liberals in denying the Biblical affirmation of guilt by association? Have they not already done so in deed, if not in word? According to 2 John 9–11, those who engage in this practice will be just as lost and Hell will be just as hot for them as if they had actually preached and/or practiced the errors of the purveyors of error they have endorsed and are endorsing.

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(Continued From Page 3)

steadfastness in the faith. Their silence will only compound the sore disappointment of many concerning their fellowship compromises since the summer of 2005, and will make the cloud over the congregation and the school even darker and larger than it has already developed. I suspect the Grider material has already provoked quite a stir among alumni who earnestly want FH and MSOP to be faithful to the Truth (as we all do). Is the Grider/Young article what these “balanced” brethren mean by “balance”?

To say the least, Grider’s bulletin article caused no little stir among certain alumni of MSOP. And, at least some, if not all, of the MSOP faculty members were chagrined at Grider’s sentiments. Of course, that does not include any of the MSOP faculty who took the position regarding Grider that they did toward Miller, saying, “They had no dog in this fight.” After all, here was the new editor of *The “new” Gospel Journal* (hereafter *T”N”GJ*), Curtis Cates, director emeritus of MSOP, who had at the time recently stepped down as president of T”N”GJ Board to take the place of the former Co-Editors John Moore and none other than Barry Grider, with Moore a new T”N”GJ board member. Also, continuing to sit on said board is Tommy Hicks, who had only a few months’ earlier edited out Young’s material from his lectureship book, rebuking him for including it in his oral lecture anyway. Then, what to their wondering eyes did appear, but the edited out material from Tyler Young’s Lubbock Lectureship book in, of all places, the FH bulletin, edited by bro. Barry Grider. To top it all off, Young’s material was commended by Grider and followed by the old article, “I Drew My Circle Again”—the denominational anthem for fellowshipping everything from Tom cats to Bed Bugs. How that would have thrilled the late Carl Ketcherside and certainly warmed the cockles of Rubel Shelley’s heart. That is what you call a Barry Grider “In Your Face” response. It certainly would be interesting to hear what the late MSOP director bro. Roy J. Hearn would have said about these shenanigans.

As 2009 progressed various protests continued to be directed toward Grider’s high jinks. And, whether it was meant to be or not, it was an astute political move on the part of MSOP to blot out the 2009 MSOP Lectureship’s Open Forum from the lecture schedule. Real open forums can be dangerous, as some US Congressman and Senators have learned in recent times. Yes, it is a dangerous thing to allow one’s supporters the freedom to speak in such gatherings—especially the liberty to ask probing questions. Double-minded characters cannot afford to let their supporters have too much freedom lest their constituents learn about all the “ways and means” of the

inner circles of the “movers and shakers” of whatever organization is under scrutiny. As Moses said, “**Be sure your sins will find you out**” (Num. 32:23).

MSOP, FH, et al., Owe Brother Grider An Apology

Is it not a bit strange that for four years FH, MSOP et al., have gone into all sorts of mental contortions and out right contradictions of their previous teaching on the subject of fellowship to defend and protect the unrepentant Dave Miller? But, when it came to brother Grider’s troubles no such effort on their part was made on his behalf? Grider was standing with MSOP, et al., defending Miller and smiting such Philistines as your editor because of our opposition to fellowshipping an unrepentant false teacher. MSOP, Grider and friends had “gotten used to it,” but we had not. Moreover, some of us are not going to “get used” to such unscriptural conduct in Miller, Grider or anyone else.

But, how is it that Grider’s sins are any more heinous than those Miller committed and refuses to repent of? The answer to the preceding question is this—*Grider’s sins are **no** worse than Miller’s*. And, if certain brethren can seek to justify Miller in his errors (as they have been doing for four years), why did not Grider deserve the same treatment from those who have defended Miller? Where were Grider’s friends when he needed them? Why is MSOP alumnus Larry Powers NOT crying out loud and long “Inconsistent,” “Inconsistent” concerning the treatment Grider received when contrasted with the treatment that Grider and friends extended to bro. Dave Miller?

Miller did not bear the same relationship to FH and MSOP that Grider did. In moving to Apologetics Press in Montgomery, AL, Miller moved into a circle of fellowship with a host of brethren who were also supporters and friends of MSOP, GBN, et al. Thus, it was more profitable for MSOP, from their perspective, to support Dave Miller than to alienate many who supported AP and Miller—brethren who were also their own personal friends and big supporters. They could defend and “fellowship” Miller at a distance, but not so with Barry Grider. Brother Grider was a product of MSOP. He was a part of the inner workings of the FH, MSOP arrangement. Bro. Grider had to resign.

Many MSOP alumni salvaged their consciences to the point of ignoring Miller’s sins as they turned a blind eye to the unscriptural efforts of Cates, Elkins, Grider, and friends in their weak and insipid defense of why they extended their fellowship to the unrepentant Miller. But they could not abide Grider’s getting used to what Young said, much less telling them in no uncertain terms to get

used to it. And what were they to get use to? *Grider's ever growing circle of fellowship.*

Poor bro. Grider, all he was attempting to do in his defense of Tyler Young and in his fellowship circle article was consistently and logically make the same kind of defense for Young as he and others had provided for Dave Miller. How much more naïve could Grider be? He did not realize that some of his own friends did not dare to consistently apply the same standard to him that they applied to bro. Miller? Thus, as it happened to the Nazis on D-Day, bro. Grider “was caught with his panzer circles down.”

The truth of the matter is this: In view of what Grider intended to accomplish as the preacher at FH, he was premature in expressing his views and, of all things, declaring them in the place that he did. In fact, Grider's and Young's articles confirmed what many of us have been saying and writing since about July 20, 2005—that many of these fellows who are defending the unrepentant Miller, Crowley et al., are extending their fellowship to more and more brethren who are caught up to one degree on another in some sort of error. More and more of this kind of unscriptural fellowship will, in time, reveal itself. Obviously Grider was ready to openly declare himself or he would not have printed what he did in the Feb. 10, 2009 FH bulletin, the collective mes-

sage of which was, “If you think we are fellowshiping folks of which you disapprove of now, just see who we extend our fellowship to in the future.” And, what did brother Grider pontificate to everyone regarding such big circle fellowship— “Get used to it.” And, guess what? Grider was right. Certain ones in FH, MSOP, et al., are all employing Grider's big fellowship circle and they are making it larger with each passing day.

When one elder must hold his fellow elders' feet to the proverbial fire in order to dislodge a teacher of error from the pulpit, one knows that a sad day has come for that church. This is the case because: (1) all of the elders of a church should have acted without such pressure and (2) the erring preacher scripturally disciplined and not allowed to resign as if the matter was a disagreement such as Paul and Barnabas had over John Mark.

No one should be surprised when such a fellow is found “sitting in the gates,” building on the support he already has, and patiently waiting until the necessary funerals take place. Then Absalom will take the kingdom. **“Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?”** (Mk.8:18)

—David P. Brown, Editor



A Sordid Biblical Picture Of Modern America

R. L. Whiteside

“For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due.” (Rom. 1:26-27).

Paul is not indulging in a lot of fanciful speculations nor presenting baseless theories. He is showing how the heathen nations had reached the lowest degree of moral degradation. When people cease to respect God, they will not long respect their own bodies. They give themselves up to passions of dishonor. Their women become abusers of their own bodies. The men indulged in the debasing practice of sodomy.

We are told that this was a common practice among the prominent men of Greece, and also the Romans. When the greatest men of a nation descend to the lowest conceivable

form of immorality, it shows how powerless education and philosophy are to save men from the deepest depths of moral pollution. ☞

[Bro. Whiteside was a great force for God's Truth during the first half of the 20th Century. One hundred years ago he was preaching for the College Church in Abilene, the only one there at the time. He had moved there to teach the Bible in the old ACC. After a brief interval he became it's president and began what came to be the annual ACC Lectureship. Unlike today, the struggling fledgling school was composed of brethren who loved the Word of God and sought the Old Paths. Bro. Whiteside passed away in 1951. *What would he think of America and the Lord's church today?* —Editor]

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“In Mt. 19, Where Does It Say They Are Not Divorced? It Says They Committed Adultery, But I Cannot Find Where It Says They Were Not Divorced.”

Kevin Cauley

The questioner is referring to Mt. 19:9. Jesus is stating what His law is regarding marriage and divorce. Jesus says, **“And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.”** The questioner is also referring to a statement that I made in my sermon several weeks ago. In explaining what this verse means, I stated in the sermon that the one who puts away his or her spouse and remarries for reasons other than fornication commits adultery. What this means is that they are not really divorced—they are still married to their first husband or wife as far as God is concerned. The questioner asks, “Where does it say they are not divorced?” The answer is found in Mt. 19:6, **“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”** This verse says that they are not divorced. One can certainly pretend that he or she is divorced and even get a legal statement from our government in that regard but Mt. 19:6 states that that is not the case. When God joins a couple in marriage, the two are joined by God and no man has the authority to separate them. Thus, Jesus says that those who “divorce” (i.e. who seek an earthly dissolution to their marriage, not a heavenly one) and “remarry” (i.e. seek an earthly bond to their marriage, not a heavenly one) are actually committing adultery. The implication of the word adultery in this context is that they are NOT divorced as far as God is concerned, and that they are NOT married as far as God is concerned—they are living in a state of sinfulness that God calls adultery. As far as God is concerned, they are still joined to their original spouses because man has no authority to put asunder what God has joined together. So the answer to the question is that when you look at Mt. 19:6 in conjunction with Mt. 19:9, the scriptures clearly teach that the couple that commits adultery (i.e. the ones who have “divorced” and “remarried” without God’s authority) are not really divorced at all.

In relation to this we also note Heb. 13:4, **“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”** Notice that in contrast to marriage, there is what is called adultery. This verse thus defines adultery as something that occurs outside of a marriage blessed by God. So according to this verse, it is impossible for those who commit adultery with each other to be scripturally married to each other—the definition just does not allow for that. Applying this definition to adultery in Mt. 19:9 just further corroborates the point. Those who commit adultery in this passage are not divorced and married as far as God is concerned—they are in the relationship that God calls adultery (<http://preachersfiles.com/in-matthew-19-where-does-it-say-they-are-not-divorced/>).

—8900 Manchaca Rd.
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When Civil Law Conflicts With God’s Law Does Civil Law Nullify God’s Law, Thereby Becoming The Law To Which Men Are Amenable To God?

In his article bro. Cauley quoted Jesus, saying, **“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”** (Mt. 19:6). He interpreted that sentence correctly and properly applied it to a case wherein one person had put away its spouse, but the spouse who was put away had not committed fornication. Cauley then rightly pointed out:

As far as God is concerned, they are still joined to their original spouses because man has no authority to put asunder what God has joined together.

I do not know what all bro. Cauley thinks is implied by what he taught except as he tells us in his article. *But as long as a God-joined-Mt. 19:6-marriage exists, it is subject to, as the need arises, the application of Mt. 19:9.* Thus, **only** when a “guilty-of-fornication-spouse” is put away for said fornication by the spouse who is innocent of fornication will God dissolve said marriage. Then, the “innocent-of-fornication-spouse” is scripturally authorized to contract another “Mt. 19:6-God-joined-marriage.” *Human will manifested in civil court decisions, human legislation and/or degrees of monarchs do not make nor dissolve marriages.* Only God makes and dissolves marriages. Man can **attempt** to do either one contrary to God’s revealed Will, but he cannot do it.

Cauley is one of the instructors in the SWSBS and his father is one of the SW church’s elders. Over the years different errors on MDR were taught by, at least, the now apostate Joseph Meador and Stan Crowley, preacher for the Shertz Church, Shertz, TX. Knowing that Crowley espoused error on MDR and was instrumental in dividing the Buda/Kyle congregation over his errors on the same, the SW elders allowed him to graduate from SWSBS anyway. To this day the SW church has not obeyed God in marking those who came out from them teaching error on MDR.

While working with the SWSBS I wrote a series of articles on MDR. They appeared weekly in the SW Church bulletin. I did not hear any criticism from SW members concerning what I wrote. But, over the years various errors on MDR were taught in SWSBS by reason of which the way of Truth I taught and teach on certain aspects of MDR was evil spoken of. **Begining on p. 11 those 1992 bulletin articles are once again printed for your study.**

—Editor

DAVID P. BROWN'S 1992 SOUTHWEST CHURCH OF CHRIST'S BULLETIN ARTICLES ON MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE.

“WHAT...GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER” (Matt. 19:6)

What kind of persons will God “join together” to be husband and wife?

1. A single person who has never been married.
2. A person whose spouse has died.
3. A person (innocent of fornication party) who has “put away” (divorced) his/her spouse because said spouse was guilty of fornication (Matt. 5:32; 19:9).

God will “join together” anyone who is described by the above three categories with any other who is also described by the above three categories as long as it is male “joined” or married to female. This is what is meant by scripturally qualified persons (Matt. 19:4-9).

When a scripturally eligible man and woman desire to have an “honorable” and “undefiled bed” marriage (Heb. 13:4), they must be “joined together” or married by God. Such a marriage is until one or the other of them dies (Rom. 7:2). This is God’s rule without His exception given in Matthew 19:9 (Mark 10:11, 12).

God “joins together” a scripturally eligible man and woman who desire marriage as husband and wife when they have met the requirements of the civil state or whatever proper manner or means the two have at their disposal to announce the beginning of their life together as husband and wife. God expects all men to abide by the “laws of the land” in everything wherein those laws do not violate His laws (Rom. 13; Acts 4:19, 20). Said laws vary from nation to nation and in the U.S. from state to state. In fact, what the state required of my wife and me in order to be married has now been changed. Whatever way is acceptable to society (as long as God’s will is not broken) whereby a man and woman may declare their purposed resolve to be husband and wife, God, at that point, joins them together. Commonly in our nation, that point has been/is when the authorized official pronounces them husband and wife.

Where there has been no civil law regarding marriage, men have always had some way of acknowledging a marriage or the exact point when God “joined them together.” God joins the eligible couple together at the aforementioned point before and not with their first sexual intercourse (Gen. 24:67; 29:21-23). Sexual intercourse is a privilege and re-

sponsibility within the marriage bond, not to bring the marriage into existence (1 Cor. 7:2-4).

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“WHAT ... GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER” (2)

According to God’s word, there are two situations in which a “God joined together” marriage is dissolved: (1) When either the husband or wife dies (Rom. 7:2). (2) When an innocent-of-fornication spouse “puts away” (divorces) his/her guilty-of-fornication spouse (Matt. 19:9) the widow/widower and the innocent-of-fornication spouse are authorized by the scriptures to once again contract a “God joined-together” or an “undefiled-bed” marriage (Matt. 19:6, 9; Heb. 13:4).

There are scripturally authorized marriages and there are unscripturally authorized marriages. If marriages are not authorized by the scriptures, then who or what authorized them? The answer to our question is, some form of civil government. Does a civil government-authorized-marriage mean that upon such authorization God joins the two scripturally-ineligible parties as husband and wife (Matt. 19:6)? Absolutely not. If so, in a land where concubinage and polygamy are legal, such marriages would be acceptable to God. Is anyone prepared to affirm that civil government is the only standard of moral conduct in the world? Also, are we prepared to affirm that on the basis of who the state joins together as husband and wife, so does God?

Matthew 19:9 forbids an eligible person from marrying one who has been put away for fornication. Such is the significance of the latter part of the verse: “... and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” Suppose that an eligible person “marries” a person who has been put away for fornication. Does God join the two together to form an “undefiled bed” marriage? Absolutely not. Such is nothing less than an adulterous union. What is the eligible party to do when he/she learns the error of his/her “marriage”? Of course, the answer is to cease and desist in the adultery in which he/she has thus far involved himself/herself. Desirous of obeying God, the penitent, eligible-to-marry person ceases his/her adulterous “marriage.”

The question for next week's article is, "Is such a person's scriptural eligibility to marry lost when he/she engaged in a civil government-ordained 'marriage' (civil government-approved adultery)?"

[*The Southwesterner*...for the week of October 4, 1992].



“WHAT ... GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER” (3)

In our last article we announced that in this third installment we would address whether or not an eligible person who entered into a civil government-ordained or approved adulterous union (“marriage”), learned the error of his/her way and ceased the sinful union (“marriage”), would retain his/her eligibility to contract a scriptural marriage. Later we shall address this matter, but for now let us examine another important and timely subject.

The October issue of the *Firm Foundation* carried an article by Elton Holden of San Pablo, CA, that revealed a bill in Congress that if it became law would place homosexuals under the protection of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Thereby, homosexuals would be considered a minority group in the U.S., just as Asians, Blacks and Hispanics. Homosexuals, therefore, would have all of the same rights and privileges in the U.S. as the aforementioned three groups. Hence, to speak out against homosexuals would be against the law. The terrible implications of this heinous bill are tremendous and far-reaching.

When studying the Bible with a homosexual, you show that the Bible condemns homosexuality as immorality, you would be in violation of the law and discriminating against that person. If said bill becomes law, this would be the same as telling a Black person that he/she is in sin because he/she is Black. Federal indictments could very well be brought against anyone or any institution (the church) that opposed homosexuality.

Although for some time there has been before the Texas legislature a bill to legalize homosexual “marriages,” the aforementioned congressional legislation would make opposition to such “marriages” a federal crime. If homosexual “marriages” do become legal, they will not be anything more or less in the eyes of God than fornicating partnerships. God's people will deal with them accordingly. God will not make them marriages because man's immoral thinking decides to call them such.

The faithful child of God knows that man-made laws do not supersede, alter or make null and void God's law. Man is to obey the laws of the land only in so far as they are in harmony with God's law (Rom. 13:1-7; Acts 5:29). God does not alter his truth on morality or anything else to comply with the laws that are in opposition to his word. This covers his existence, the deity of Christ, the inspiration of the Bible, the plan of salvation, the church (organization, worship, work, and destiny), Christian living or marriage, divorce and re-

marriage. (More to come)

[*The Southwesterner*...for the week of October 11, 1992].



“WHAT ... GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER” (4)

In last week's article we referred to a bill that is now before Congress that would place homosexuals under the protection of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In the Senate that bill is S.B. 574. It is sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy. Its companion bill in the House is sponsored by Rep. Barney Frank, whose male lover ran a prostitution ring out of the congressman's residence. If the bill becomes law, it will give a man who marries another man the same rights as a husband and wife.

In last week's article we pointed out that “God will not make them marriages because man's immoral thinking decides to call them such.” By this statement I mean that a scriptural marriage does not begin solely on the basis of civil law alone. Therefore, for man to think that he can legislate a marriage into being that is contrary to God's law on marriage, and yet have it subject to God's teaching concerning scriptural marriages, is palpably false. There are unscriptural marriages and there are scriptural marriages (Matt. 19:6-9). The unscriptural marriage cannot, by its very nature, be dealt with as the scriptural marriage any more than an unscriptural church can be dealt with as a scriptural church. What is the nature of an unscriptural marriage? Where both parties have never had a scriptural marriage, they are two persons engaged in a perpetual fornicating partnership. Where at least one of the parties has had a scriptural marriage, said relationship would be an

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adulterous union. In either case God has not joined together the parties. If God has not joined them together, then his laws pertaining to scriptural marriages do not apply. Where man's will is in contradiction to God's will, the will of man does not abrogate the will of God. It seems that some think that what man joins together God must alter his laws accordingly. However, the Bible still declares: **"We ought to obey God rather than men"** (Acts 5:29).

[*The Southwestern*...for the week of October 18, 1992].



"WHAT ... GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER" (5)

As we continue our study of homosexual marriages, we want to emphasize a very important truth. Please consider the following statement: IF GOD JOINS TOGETHER ONLY THOSE PERSONS WHO ARE AUTHORIZED BY THE BIBLE TO BE MARRIED TO ONE ANOTHER; AND, IF HOMOSEXUALS ARE NOT PERSONS WHO ARE AUTHORIZED BY THE BIBLE TO BE MARRIED TO ONE ANOTHER; THEN GOD DOES NOT JOIN TOGETHER HOMOSEXUALS IN MARRIAGE. It is true that God joins together only those persons who are authorized by the Bible to be married to one another (Matt. 19:6; Col. 3:17). Hence, God does not join together homosexuals in marriage.

Someone may ask: Since men are free moral agents, does not God give them the freedom to contract a marriage (homosexual marriage) that is not authorized by the Bible? Yes, he does. Civil government (men using their moral freedom) may enact laws that legalize homosexual marriages, bestial marriages or anything else immoral and spiritually corrupted men might decide to call a marriage. BUT, CIVIL LAW DOES NOT TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER THE MORAL PRECEPTS OF THE BIBLE. Hence, God's moral law ALWAYS takes precedence over civil law. Man cannot legislate God's laws out of existence! Thus, if God's moral precepts are to take precedence over the civil, and they are,

then we must look to the moral precepts of the Bible (not civil law) in deciding who and when one may marry, divorce a companion for fornication and marry another. (More to come)

[*The Southwestern*...for the week of October 25, 1992].



"WHAT ... GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER" (6)

PROBLEM: The civil government has legalized homosexual marriages. Two men, A and B, who have never been in any kind of marriage, are joined together (married) by the civil government. They are taught the gospel. Both men (A and B) see their lost condition; believe in Christ; repent of their sins (thus, ceasing their sinful conduct); confess their faith in Christ; and are scripturally baptized. Because they are legally married (marriage license, etc.), they must obtain a legal divorce, through the proper court. This they do. **QUESTION:** ARE EITHER OF THE AFOREMENTIONED MEN SCRIPTURALLY AUTHORIZED TO CONTRACT A SCRIPTURAL MARRIAGE? YES, THE SCRIPTURES AUTHORIZE EITHER ONE TO CONTRACT A SCRIPTURAL MARRIAGE. Why is such the case? BECAUSE if the law concerning divorce and remarriage as stated in Matthew 19:9 is a law which is from the beginning, then the law concerning divorce and remarriage as stated in Matthew 19:9 can only be applied to a marriage which in the first instance patterned itself after the marriage which was from the beginning.

[*The Southwestern*...for the week of November 1, 1992].

"WHAT GOD ... HATH JOINED TOGETHER" (7)

All that is meant when we teach that God joins together an eligible man and woman to be husband and wife is that both parties have complied with God's moral principles pertaining to when He (God) considers a man and woman to be married. These moral laws were established by God **"at the beginning."**

"At the beginning" God **"made them male and female..."** Also **"at the beginning"** He had something to say as to why He made mankind **"male"** and **"female."** God said that because He made mankind male and female that **"a man"** shall **"leave father and mother"** and **"cleave to his wife."** Hence, **"they two"** (a male and female) **"shall be one flesh"** (a single unit in design, purpose and practice). Therefore, we conclude that a male and a female may live together as husband and wife only when they resolve to leave their parents and live together until death parts them (Rom. 7:2).

The Jews who introduced the whole discussion understood that they were dealing with one man and his wife (Matt. 19:3, 7). Jesus took them back to the explicit teaching of God **"at the beginning."** He emphasized its implications and applied Matthew 19:9 to the kind of marriage instituted

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by God **“at the beginning.”**

There is nothing any more mysterious about God joining together an eligible man and woman to be husband and wife than the Lord adding to the church eligible persons (the saved, Acts 2:47). Notice the words, **“the Lord added ...”** and **“God hath joined.”** Why is one grouping of words any more mysterious than the other? When persons comply with God’s will pertaining to becoming a Christian, the Lord adds them to others who have done likewise. Over the years we have correctly taught that the forgiveness of one’s sins takes place in the mind of God solely on the basis of a person’s complying with God’s will pertaining to the forgiveness of sin. Thus, in God’s mind God adds those who are saved to others who have done likewise. Regarding marriage, God accepts as scripturally married only those persons who have complied with his authorized will. Our Lord made it clear in Matthew 19:4-6 that God established his law pertaining to marriage **“at the beginning.”** Hence, just as God in His mind forgives persons’ sins solely on the basis of their having met God’s requirements for such, then when persons comply with God’s will pertaining to marriage, in His mind, He considers them married. More to come.

[*The Southwesterner...* for the week of November 8, 1992].



“WHAT ... GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER” (8)

We are glad to offer the following material on our topic from the pen of brother Guy N. Woods. We deeply appreciate his allowing us to print it.--D.P.B.

In the *GOSPEL ADVOCATE*, this question was raised: “If a man divorced his wife without cause and married another, would the wife, being an innocent party, be free to marry if her former husband and not she obtained the divorce?” I answered “Yes.” A brother wrote, “I disagree with your answer as Matthew 19:9 says, **‘And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.’** The above scripture teaches me that the person who marries the woman that was divorced even though she was innocent would commit adultery.”

He has grossly misapprehended the teaching of our Lord in this passage. (1) He has ignored the exception which the Lord put into the verse. He strikes out the words, **“except for fornication,”** in order to deny what the Lord, by implication, affirmed. It should read, in his view, **“Whosoever shall put away his wife even in the case of fornication and marries another, commits adultery and he who marries her thus put away commits adultery.”** (2) He disregards the grammar of the passage which makes the exception clause, except for fornication, modify the entire statement including the final clause, **“He that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.”** (3) He rules

out any occasion when an innocent party may properly and scripturally remarry. He is, therefore, in grave error in the conclusion drawn.

To put the matter in proper perspective let us assume the following instance: Jane and John, both single, neither having been previously wedded, marry. John, of weak character, soon tires of Jane and abandons her though she is a good wife, and a faithful Christian woman. As soon as he can conveniently do so, he contracts another marriage. Not free to remarry, his relationship with the second woman, though legal, is adulterous. Jane, meantime, has remained free of marital relationship, and would have received John back at any time prior to the adulterous marriage into which he entered. Being a Christian woman, she does not recognize the state’s legal grounds for divorce, willing only to accept the Lord’s ground—fornication. By unscripturally contracting marriage with the second woman, John is now guilty of the act constituting the exception clause of Matthew 19. Jane meets Bill, a fine Christian man never before married. May she scripturally marry him? Of course she may. To deny to her this is presumptuously to pass judgment on the validity of the Lord’s edict and take from her what the Lord granted. Jesus said, “Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery.”

If the objection is raised that Jane did not divorce John but John (the guilty party) divorced Jane, it should be remembered that divorce is a civil, legal action having nothing whatsoever to do with determining the moral and religious principles involved. It is the Lord’s edict, not man’s, that governs. ‘But,’ it may further be objected, “Jane and John were not living together at the time when the fornication occurred. “Who said they had to be? To inject this condition into the exception clause is to speak where the Lord has not spoken, is to legislate for him! Suppose, for example, that Jane, while married to John, had suffered mental illness and required residence and treatment in a mental hospital for five years. During this interval John cohabited with another woman. Would Jane, because she was not living under the same roof as John, be denied the right to put him away “for fornication”? He who so affirms has abandoned reason, revelation, and good sense!

The implications of scripture touching marriage and divorce are crystal clear. The New Testament teaches that when one of the parties of the marriage bond becomes guilty of fornication the other (the innocent one, not the guilty) may scripturally put away the offending party and remarry. Luke 16: 18 does not countermand Matthew 19:9, it simply supplements it.

Woods, Guy N., *Questions and Answers*. Vol. II. Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1986, pp. 45, 46. Used by permission.

[*The Southwesterner...* for the week of November 15,

1992].



“WHAT ... GOD HATH JOINED TOGETHER” (9)

In our last bulletin we ran brother Guy N. Wood’s material dealing with what some people call the “waiting game,” but in reality is not. In this week’s space we are glad to run an article by brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr., dealing with what in actuality is the “waiting game,” which waiting game is sinful — D.P.B.

WHAT ABOUT THE WAIT-AND-SEE GAME DIVORCEES PLAY?

Maritally unhappy people fall out of love; they fight and fuss constantly; they make each other more than miserable; vows taken at a marriage altar years ago no longer are taken seriously; they wish to write finis to their deteriorating marriage. Neither has been guilty of fornication – the capital crime of matrimony. They divorce mutually. Each begins to play a wait-and-see game. Which one will stay single longer? Which one will forego sexual cohabitation longer? When one gives in to fleshly lusts and fornicates or enters into another marriage, then the other is elated and feels perfectly justified in contracting a new marriage and pleads Matthew 19:9 as the very ground for such justification. Such people abuse faith and misuse Matthew 19:9 as much as denominational preachers do faith and baptism passages. Matthew 19:9 allows divorce and remarriage FOR the innocent one UPON the GROUNDS of fornication. But their marital break-up was not **“except it be for fornication.”** The grammatical force of “except” here is “If and only if” it be for fornication may the innocent one put away the guilty party and enter into another eligible marriage. The wait-and-see game is as lethal as it can be. Yet it has many practitioners and as many, if not more, defenders and promoters.

(Taylor, Robert R., Jr. *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*. Seventeenth Annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship, 1992, p. 63. Used by permission.)

[*The Southwesterner*...for the week of November 29, 1992].



“WHAT... GOD, HATH JOINED TOGETHER” (10)

Is it a new thing for some members of the church to teach that only God can truly dissolve a marriage? In commenting on Matthew 19:4-6, J. W. McGarvey wrote: “from these premises the conclusion follows (verse 6) that what God has thus joined together man shall not put asunder. Of course, God who joined them together may put them asunder by prescribing the conditions of lawful divorce, but man has nothing to do in the case except to obey God’s law. Any act of divorce, therefore, or any legislation by State or Church on the subject, inconsistent with the divine law, is open rebellion against the authority of Christ” [*The New Testament Commentary*, (Abilene: Chronicle Publishing Co., Inc. orig-

inally published in 1875), p. 164]. Later, in commenting on these same verses he wrote, “that no men or body of men, whether acting in private, civil or ecclesiastical capacity, can dissolve marriage otherwise than according to the decrees of God” [*Fourfold Gospel*, (Cincinnati: Standard Publication Co., n.d.), p. 539]. *The Fourfold Gospel* was published in 1905. In the *Gospel Advocate* set of commentaries, H. Leo Boles, writing in 1936, had these comments on Matthew 19:6: “God’s laws by virtue of his creating them male and female take precedence over all human laws. The courts of the land dissolve many unions which God still holds as fundamental and abiding; the laws of the land grant divorces for causes which God does not permit. Man’s laws cannot change the mind of God or the fundamental laws of God; hence man’s laws cannot annul the marriage bonds which God has sanctioned” (*The Gospel According to Matthew*, p. 387). [*The Southwesterner*...for the week of December 6, 1992].

—P. O. Box 2357
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The preceding bulletin articles were written 17 years ago. Since that time the following false doctrines have been espoused by some who were connected with SW and SWSBS. Some time ago the SW elders published a statement regarding MDR but they ignored these errors. The errors are: (1) In order for Mt. 19:9 to be applicable, the Scriptures teach that a spouse must commit fornication *before* the civil court decree of divorce is granted. (2) When a civil court decree of divorce is granted where neither spouse is guilty of fornication, the Mt. 19:6-God-joined-marriage remains intake, but if fornication later takes place, Mt. 19:9 has no bearing on such a case. (3) Men may dissolve Mt. 19:6-God-joined-marriages when they divorce contrary to Mt. 19:9, but neither spouse in such a marriage is free to contract another marriage because they ended their marriage contrary to Mt. 19:9. (4) If fornication takes place when a husband is separated from his wife for any reason and for any length of time without both being in mutual agreement to the separation, Mt. 19:9 does not apply (Stan Crowley’s false doctrine). —Editor

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Ocoee—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516, ocoeechurchofchrist@yahoo.com, www.ocoeeccoc.org.

Pensacola—Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595.

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Belvedere (Greater Augusta, Georgia Area)—Church of Christ, 535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841, www.belvederechurchofchrist.org; e-mail belvecoc@gmail.com, (803) 442-6388, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Evangelist: Ken Chumbley (803) 279-8663.

-Oklahoma-

Porum— Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: lawson@starnetok.net.

- Tennessee-

Murfreesboro—Church of Christ, 1154 Park Avenue, Murfreesboro, TN 37129, Sun. Bible class 9:00 a.m., Worship 10:00 a.m., Fellowship meal 11:00 a.m., Devotional 12:00 p.m.; Wed. Bible Study 7:00 p.m. For directions and other information please visit our website at www.murfreesboro-churchofchrist.org. evangelist, Steve Yeatts.

-Texas-

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 5101 E. University Dr. (Greenbelt Business Park). Mailing address: Northpoint Church of Christ, Greenbelt Business Park, 5101 E. University Dr., Box 6, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.387.1429; tgjoriginal@verizon.net.

Evant—Evant Church of Christ, 310 West Brooks Drive, Evant, TX 76525. Office: (254) 471-5705; Jess Whitlock, evangelist (254) 471-5717.

Houston area—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring Contending for the Faith Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February. www.churchesofchrist.com.

Hubbard—105 NE 6th St., Hubbard, TX 76648, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Delbert J. Goines; DJGoines@Valornet.com.

Huntsville—1380 Fish Hatchery Rd. Huntsville, TX 77320. Sun. 9 a. m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (936) 438-8202.

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