

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

A SERMON REVIEWED, RICK ATCHLEY'S PRESCRIPTION FOR DIVISION

JERRY MURRELL

On March 1, 2006, Rick Atchley preached a sermon entitled "Learning Division." This sermon was the third in a series he characterized as "United Kingdom." Rick is a very talented speaker. I first met him when he spoke at Lipscomb at what is now called the Harold Hazelip Biblical Preaching Seminar, while I was finishing up a degree there. He is a very charismatic person and excellent speaker. He is not in the class of Jeff Foxworthy or Mike Cope when it comes to comedy, but he can make some interesting points with humor from time to time.

WHAT WERE THE CAUSES OF THE 1906 DIVISION?

This sermon was an attempt to minimize the division that took place between the churches of Christ and what has been called the "Independent Christian churches" in the late 1800's (recognized by the Census bureau in 1906). He attempted to do this by changing the causes of the division in a slight of hand kind of way. The first point in his three point outline (I know it is hard to believe that a change agent used a method as outdated as preaching a three-point outline) was that the real cause of the division was not the missionary society or mechanical instruments of music used in worship, but the church of Christ divided over the civil war. He did this knowing that what most people would understand from his words was that people in the South wanted to keep slaves and when the North took their slaves away they withdrew fellowship from Northern churches based on this desire. The first person of any historical ability to advance this thesis was David Edwin Harrell, in his two volumes, *A Social History of the Disciples of Christ* (based on his earlier doctrinal dissertation at Vanderbilt). Harrell himself has given up the thesis that the division took place because of the civil war. Note these words from Harrell in a *Restoration Quarterly* review of Richard Hughes book, *Rethinking the History of Churches of Christ*. Harrell said, Hughes "shows convincingly that the intellectual gulf between the Churches of Christ and Christian Church did not suddenly appear in 1906 or, indeed, in the years after the

Civil War, but had been visible many years earlier."¹

It is far beyond the scope of a single article to take up a point by point answer to such an overblown historical case. However a few observations are in order that should be enough to defeat the underlying premises. The idea that the civil war caused this division is sometimes called in shorthand terms "the sectionalism thesis." Atchley cited with approval a master's thesis from Abilene Christian University that argued that the area of the country that sided with the North became dominated by Christian churches and the areas of the nation that sided with the South became dominated by churches of Christ. Let's see how this thesis holds up in the light of the known facts. (1) In 1889, Daniel Sommer preached a sermon called "The Address and Declaration" which many credit with being the sermon that threw down the gauntlet of division that would come later. Sommer was born in Maryland, and lived in Ohio when he was the publisher of the *American Christian Review*. This paper was early in beating the drum in opposition to the "instrument and society churches." The famous sermon was preached in Sand Creek Illinois. While you may not have known all of these facts off the top of your head, you do know that in 1861 a man named Abraham Lincoln left Springfield Illinois, to be inaugurated President of the United States. This state still has on its license plates, "Land of Lincoln." Illinois was not exactly a hotbed for Southern sympathies during the civil war. Yet, it was in Illinois that thousands gathered in support of Sommer's position that these "society and instrumental music churches" were not worthy of fellowship.

Those who advance the "civil war thesis" try to forget about the role of Sommer in the division, as do some on the other side because of later positions taken by Sommer. Liberals attempt to make David Lipscomb the guy in the black hat who divided the church. They are quick to point out that Lipscomb was angered by the American Christian Missionary Society passing a resolution condemning the South during the course of the civil war. Atchley is honest enough to admit that Lipscomb's main problem with this was he took the position that all war was

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917-October 10, 2001

Editorial...

“FACTS ARE STUBBORN THINGS: AND WHATEVER MAY BE OUR WISHES, OUR INCLINATIONS, OR THE DICTATES OF OUR PASSIONS, THEY CANNOT ALTER THE STATE OF FACTS AND EVIDENCE.”

The title of this editorial is a quote attributed to John Quincy Adams. Whether it is a fact that Adams said it or not, the TRUTH conveyed in the statement is often ignored and sometimes by design overlooked. We have chosen to use said quote as the title of this editorial for the same reason we employed it in the January 2001 issue—because of its truthfulness and appropriateness—especially and specifically when applied to the actions of Tom Bright, Director of the On Line Academy of Bible Studies (OABS), along with Bobby Diggs and Edgar Schultz elders of the Phillips Street Church of Christ, Dyersburg, Tennessee, the overseeing eldership of OABS, in their decision not to carry the Tuesday, February 28 Open Forum of the 2006 Spring *CFTF* Lectures.

Immediately following this editorial is the statement from the Spring elders, Buddy Roth and Kenneth D. Cohn. It was read by brother Cohn to the March 2 evening audience in house and over the internet of the 2006 *CFTF* Spring Lectures. The statement pertains to certain facts that follow.

WHATEVER HAS BEEN OR WILL BE OFFERED BY THE POWERS THAT BE AT OABS AS TO WHY THEY “PULLED THE PLUG” ON THE SPRING OPEN FORUM THOSE “REASONS” “...CANNOT ALTER THE STATE OF FACTS AND EVIDENCE” PERTAINING TO THEIR ACTIONS

Fact # 1: less than 24 hours before the Spring Forum was to begin, OABS reneged on her agreement with the Spring Church of Christ to carry the Spring Forum on her web site.

Fact # 2: this action by the governing powers of OABS breached a verbal contract they had with the Spring *CFTF* Lectureship/Spring Lectureship director/Spring church elders to provide ALL of the Spring lectures for viewing over the internet.

Fact # 3: if the Spring brethren did not have connections with another internet provider, OABS's breach of contract **at such a late date** would have in all likelihood effectively stopped the public transmission of the live Spring Forum over the internet.

Fact # 4: the tailored explanation by the Phillips' Street Church of Christ elders, Dyersburg, TN that appears, at this writing, on the OABS web site does not in any form or fashion Scripturally, logically, and/or ethically explain away the reality **that in less than 24 hours before the Spring Forum was to begin, OABS "pulled the plug" on the Spring forum.**

Fact # 5: Tom Bright, OABS director and agent acting on behalf of the Phillip's Street Church of Christ elders understood many weeks in advance of the 2006 Spring *CFTF* lectureship that the Spring Forum was a part of the 2006 Spring Lectureship. **Fact # 5a:** brother Bright understood, what the subject of the forum was to be. **Fact # 5b:** brother Bright knew who some of the participants in the forum were. **Fact # 5c:** He also knew at least some of those who had been invited to participate in the forum.

Fact # 6: OABS is without a Scriptural reason for their conduct in "pulling the plug" on the Spring forum.

Fact # 7: OABS has joined the ranks of AP, MSOP, GBN in their refusal to show written Scriptural cause for their actions **on the late date** that said actions were taken against the 2006 Spring *CFTF* Lectures took place.

Fact # 8: in keeping in concert with her brotherhood project sisters (previously named), OABS does not hesitate to ask the churches and individual Christians for money to support her work. **Fact # 8a:** However, OABS refuses to answer questions IN WRITING regarding the reason(s) or motive(s) for her actions such as the reason(s) OABS chose, **less than 24 hours before the Spring Forum was to begin**, to notify the Spring elders via Kenneth Cohn of their decision to "pull the plug" on the Spring Forum **at that late time.**

Fact # 9: As covered in the statement read by brother Cohn, (**Fact # 9a**) a meeting composed of 7 brethren (among the 7 men in said meeting three elderships were represented) was in progress in the Spring church library when the phone call came from brother Tom Bright to brother Cohn in which brother Bright informed brother Cohn that he (Cohn) needed to phone brother Bobby Diggs, one of the two elders of the Phillips Street Church of Christ, Dyersburg, TN. **Fact # 9b:** For reasons explained by brother Cohn in said public statement, all of the men present clearly heard the conversation of brother Cohn with, first, brother Diggs and, second, Phillips Street's other elder, Edgar Schultz. **Fact # 9c:** clearly both elders depended on OABS director, Tom Bright for their information regarding the Spring *CFTF* Lectures and the Spring Forum. **Fact # 9d:** neither one of the Phillips' St. elders was clear about what was being advertised on their own web site regarding the Spring *CFTF* Lectures. **Fact # 9e:** one of the Phillips St. elders went so far as to ask brother Cohn if the Spring Forum

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had been added to the Spring *CFTF* Lectures after the original advertisement for the Spring *CFTF* Lectures appeared on the OABS web site.

Fact # 10: as of March 6, 2006, on the OABS web site, the Phillips' St. elders gave the following reason for terminating the Spring Forum. Part of the statemnet reads:

...When the nature of the Open Forum was brought to our attention (please note: Tom Bright has requested that it be known that he, and he alone, was the one who failed to communicate to the elders; he has apologized to us for this), we felt the nature of the Open Forum

was something that non-members (around the world) did not need to see.

Now, this and this alone was the reason for our decision. We were not influenced by any outside source... (<http://www.oabs.org/OABSExplanation.htm>).

Fact # 10a: the following view of the Phillips Street Church of Christ elders is not authorized by the New Testament:

...we felt the nature of the Open Forum was something that non-members (around the world) did not need to see.

Now, this and this alone was the reason for our decision. We were not influenced by any outside source... (Ibid).

Fact # 10b: the Holy Spirit recorded multitudinous church problems and trouble between Christians in the writing of the New Testament for people in and out of the church to read. **Fact # 10c:** the reason the Phillips Street elders gave for “pulling the plug” on the Spring Forum is contrary to what is recorded in the New Testament regarding problems in the church. Therefore, their (the Phillips Street elders) reason stands in opposition to the divine pattern found in the Scriptures relative to internal problems in the church being revealed to non-members. **Fact # 10d:** the Phillips Street elders are inconsistent in their decision not to allow the Spring Forum to be on the internet because they approved of the rest of the Spring *CFTF* Lectures (*Anti-ism—From God or Man*) to be put on the internet, which lectures pertain to trouble and division in the Lord’s church and does not necessarily concern non-members. **Fact # 10e:** seven men heard one of the Phillips Street elders admit to brother Cohn when **facts # 10c** and **# 10d** were pointed out to him by brother Cohn, that they knew they were being inconsistent in their decision to allow the part of the Spring *CFTF* Lectures that pertained to *Anti-ism* (internal church problems) to be put on the internet by OABS, but they would not allow the Spring Forum (pertaining to internal church problems), part of the Spring *CFTF* Lectures, to be put on the internet through the auspices of OABS. **Fact # 10f:** the Phillips’ Street elders knew they were inconsistent, but they did not care, they were going to carry out their inconsistent decision no matter what.

Fact # 11: the following quote is also from the Phillips Street elders’ statement found on the OABS web site. “Tom Bright has requested that it be known that he, and he alone, was the one who failed to communicate to the elders; he has apologized to us for this...” To date Tom Bright has not apologized to the elders of the Spring Church of Christ. Also, he has not apologized to the director of the Spring *CFTF* Lectures, David P. Brown.

Fact # 12: the authority delegated to elders by the New Testament does not authorize elders to violate the Golden Rule, and does not authorize elders to be inconsistent, or make any decision(s) without Scriptural reason(s) for said decisions.

Fact # 13: there is no Scriptural way for Tom Bright, the Phillips Street Church of Christ elders, or anyone

else to successfully prove that the actions of OABS taken against the 2006 Spring *CFTF* Lectures Open Forum was authorized by the New Testament of Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17).

QUESTIONS

1. Will Tom Bright and/or the Phillips Street Church of Christ elders put into writing the Scriptural reasons given by Bright to them (Phillips Street elders) that necessitated their (and Bright’s) change of mind from their original agreement with the Spring congregation to carry the 2006 Spring *CFTF* Lectures Open Forum over the internet?

2. Will Tom Bright, or any of his ‘buddyhood,’ affirm any one or all of the following propositions in public debate?

A. Resolved: “The authority delegated to elders by the New Testament authorizes them (elders) to violate the Golden Rule.”

B. Resolved: “Tom Bright and the Phillips Street elders practiced the Golden Rule in coming to their decision to refuse to carry the Spring *CFTF* Open Forum over OABS.”

C. Resolved: “The New Testament authorizes Christians to be inconsistent.”

D. Resolved: “The Scriptures teach that the Phillips Street elders were acting consistently when they decided to carry the lectureship portion pertaining to “Anti-ism” (an internal problem in the church), but refused to carry the Open Forum part of the 2006 Spring *CFTF* Lectures that pertained to an internal problem in the church.

E. Resolved: “The Open Forum part of the 2006 Spring *CFTF* Lectures that pertained to an internal problem in the church was a sinful activity.”

“IS IT NOTHING TO YOU, ALL YE THAT PASS BY” (LAMENTATIONS 1:12)?

In times past many of us stood “shoulder to shoulder” in our opposition to error of any kind, committed by anyone, and in defense of the objective static standard of infallible Gospel Truth that is the authoritative New Testament. The Tom Bright I thought I knew (and this is true of certain other brethren as well) seemingly were not more interested in defending their special projects and their funding sources when such meant compromising the Truth in doctrine and practice in order to do so. They were not guilty, or if they were we did not know it, of the sin of respecting men’s personages and acting in an inconsistent manner in teaching, applying, and practicing the Truth of God’s Word on any point. With the uncompromising apostle Paul we ask: “**Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth: This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.**” (Galatians 5:7-9).

—David P. Brown, Editor

A STATEMENT REGARDING THE ABROGATION

BY OABS OF AN AGREEMENT TO BROADCAST THE 2006 *CFTF*
SPRING CHURCH OF CHRIST LECTURESHIP OPEN FORUM
FEBRUARY 28, 2006

Read by Kenneth D. Cohn on March 2, 2006, during
the *Contending For The Faith* Lectures
at Spring, Texas

KENNETH D. COHN

On Monday, February 27, 2006, during the lunch break between the last morning session and the first afternoon session of the *CFTF* Spring church of Christ lectureship (the topic of which was “Anti-ism, From God or Man”), I received a phone call from Tom Bright, director of Online Academy of Bible Studies. In our conversation, brother Bright conveyed to me a request from the elders of Phillips Street church of Christ, Dyersburg, TN, overseeing eldership of OABS, that the elders of the Spring Church of Christ call them respecting the Open Forum. Using my cell phone, I called the phone number given me by brother Bright. Brother Bobby Diggs, one of the two elders of Phillips Street, answered the phone. (At the time of this call, Buddy Roth, my fellow elder, and I were in a meeting with David Watson, Dub McClish, Denny Durigan, David Brown, Michael Hatcher, and Lynn Parker. All were privy to the ensuing conversation, not because of any effort on my part to have witnesses, but rather because I had the volume turned up higher than normal because of my reduced hearing capacity, which consequently allowed the others to hear as well.)

PERMISSION DENIED

I knew before I placed the call received by brother Diggs that they would not permit the Open Forum to be broadcast over OABS. Brother Diggs stated that it was the decision of the eldership of Phillips Street not to permit the Open Forum to be broadcast over OABS. In questioning brother Diggs as to the reasons for this decision, he stated, among other things, that: 1) he did not know that the Open Forum was to be broadcast over OABS until the previous night when Tom Bright so informed him; 2) it was the decision of the elders and brother Bright did not have the authority to make the final decision; 3) it was not appropriate to broadcast the Open Forum over OABS because the purpose of the Open Forum was to deal with a matter concerning only members of the church; and 4) non Christians may sign on to the web site and be exposed to what these elders considered to be an internal church matter (comparable to what the antis do, or so they said). Brother Diggs stated that this decision only applied to the broadcasting of the Open Forum, they would still broadcast the lectureship itself.

INCONSISTENT CONDUCT

Although I could have cited many New Testament ex-

amples of matters that dealt only with internal matters (e.g., Ananias and Sapphira, Paul confronting Peter to his face, and so on), I pointed out to brother Diggs the inconsistency of their position of denying permission to broadcast the Open Forum while broadcasting the lectureship itself the topic of which (Anti-ism) only pertained to an internal matter of the church and did not pertain to non Christians. He said that on this matter they would just have to be inconsistent. During our conversation, he stated that he was not saying that we should not hold the Open Forum. He even said that he would like to be in attendance.

In an attempt to highlight his inconsistency, I made the offer to provide him a DVD of the Open Forum provided that he keep its contents confidential. Much to my surprise, he accepted the offer and agreed to keep it confidential. During the same phone call, I talked to brother Edgar Schultz, fellow elder of Phillips Street, and made the same offer and confidentiality stipulation. He also accepted. The action of the Phillips Street elders caused *CFTF* at a cost of several hundreds of dollars to contract on an emergency basis with an internet broadcast service to carry the Open Forum. Although the Phillips Street elders agreed to recommence broadcasting the lectureship, we elected not to do so.

WHY DID IT HAPPEN?

Some observations, questions, and answers are in order. The elders stated that they had learned of the Open Forum only a few days ago. Yet *CFTF* and OABS, through Tom Bright, the agent of the elders, had consummated an agreement months before. The lectureship and the Open Forum had been first advertised in the pages of *CFTF* last November. Phillips Street advertised the lectureship and Open Forum on its website weeks before the lectureship began. Does the eldership have oversight of the website as well as OABS? Are they aware of the content of the website? Are there established lines of communication among Tom Bright and the elders? What was the imperative in this case that caused Tom Bright, outside the normal lines of communication, to specially and specifically inform the elders only a day or so before the Open Forum? In a conversation with an elder of a supporting congregation in Oklahoma, Tom Bright stated that he takes full responsibility for the decision and that it was not the result of any arm-twisting by MSOP. The elders, however, stated that they had the final decision in this matter. Who, then,

was responsible for the decision? Why mention that MSOP exercised no arm-twisting? Why mention MSOP at all? Does MSOP exercise such undue influence over OABS that brother Bright must make this statement? Were there some unnamed others who may have twisted a few OABS arms?

In all of this we must look to motives behind the action. I publicly made a statement as to the role that money may have played in all of this. Any organization that depends on outside sources of funds will have under consideration, at least to some extent, the impact that their actions will have on fundraising. I have heard from some an unconfirmed comment of brother Bright that money was not the motivating factor. Since I cannot prove that money was, or was not, a motivating factor in the decision of the elders or Tom Bright, I will reserve judgment in this area until the evidence compels a determination one way or the other. But exactly what was the motivating factor or factors?

1. The elders stated that the church should not, in effect, air its “dirty laundry” before non-saints. There are some matters that should be handled only among members, such as some church discipline, but others, such as false teachers, that need to be broadcast as widely as possible. The New Testament is replete with examples of internal matters. These may be read by Christians and non-Christians alike. Certainly this cannot be the compelling motivation of the Phillips Street elders, or Tom Bright, since they had already broadcast lectures on the topic of “Anti-ism”, peculiar only to churches of Christ, and were ready and willing to continue to broadcast this topic before and after the Open Forum. Although we elected not to do so, OABS, of their own volition, placed on their website a link to our broadcast of the lectureship, and then took it off again. There was something peculiar about the Open Forum that gave the elders and Tom Bright serious heartburn. What was it?

2. Was the Open Forum teaching error, or at least giving Godspeed to those who do? If so, it is incumbent upon them to specify the error and why it is false after the fashion of “**prove all things, hold fast that which is good**” (I Thessalonians 5:21). It is notable that an elder of a congregation that financially supports OABS and four OABS instructors appeared in the Open Forum. Furthermore, brother Diggs

expressed a wish to be in attendance and both elders wanted a DVD of the Open Forum, not to mention the OABS staffers signing on to our alternative broadcasting website. Are the Phillips Street elders willing to make an assertion that their own instructors and supporters are either teaching error or giving Godspeed to those who do? Let them do so.

3. Perhaps the elders claim that **CFTF** was not practicing “**longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**” (Ephesians 4:2,3). In “pulling the plug” on **CFTF**, did the Phillips Street elders practice “**longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**”?

THE BOTTOM LINE

OABS and **CFTF** entered into an oral contract in which mutual promises were exchanged that benefited each party. OABS breached that contract causing **CFTF** to incur charges of hundreds of dollars to mitigate damage. We are not asking OABS for reimbursement of these costs nor would we accept it if offered. We are asking OABS and its overseeing elders, at the very least, to explain their violation of the Golden Rule when they informed us the day before a scheduled event that was advertised months in advance that they would not broadcast it without giving any reason that will stand critical scrutiny. If they have not violated the Golden Rule, please explain why not. Lest it be said that I have not asked the Phillips Street elders, or Tom Bright, to answer any questions, I hereby request that they answer in writing all questions herein. Let it also be known that other questions are forthcoming at a different time, in a different forum, and in a different media outlet.

—P. O. Box 39
Spring, Texas 77383

NOTE: The Open Forum in its entirety is available on DVD, CD, and VHS tape from: James E. Green, 2711 Spring Meade Blvd., Columbia, TN 38401, 931.486.1364 (PH.), jgreencoc1986@yahoo.com, www.jgreencoc-video-ministry.com.

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION TO A STATEMENT FROM THE SOUTHWEST ELDERS

[This false doctrine on MDR about which the following statement of the Southwest elders is concerned first got my attention while I was working with Southwest as the director of Southwest School of Bible Studies. In the Southwest elders' statement to follow they affirm in part the following:

We, at Southwest, have long held to what has become known in our region as “The Traditional View” on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage. This view has been set forth from the Southwest pulpit for over fifty (50) years and has been written and well commented upon by faithful brethren associated with the Southwest congregation over the years, including Jerry Moffitt and Charlie DiPalma.

The previous comment is simply not true. Beginning in the first week of October and ending around the first week of December, 1992 (a period of about ten weeks) I wrote as many articles on this aspect of MDR in as many issues of The Southwesterner, the Southwest Church Bulletin. In those articles I affirmed and proved exactly what I believe today. Furthermore, I exposed and refuted the false notion as presently believed by the Southwest elders, Joseph Meador, Rick Brumback, Jerry Moffitt, Charlie DiPalma and others scattered here and there through out the land. NOT ONE SINGLE SOLITARY TIME DID THE SOUTHWEST ELDERS SAY ANYTHING AGAINST WHAT I WROTE in 1992. THEY NEVER RESPONDED TO ME IN THE WAY THAT THEY HAVE RECENTLY RESPONDED TO OTHERS. The previously mentioned bulletin articles were written because brother Jimmy Parker

and others declared that they would withdraw fellowship from those who taught what is affirmed in those 10 articles. When it was pointed out to Jimmy Parker (faithful gospel preacher Lynn Parker's uncle) in answer to accusations that we were teaching a new doctrine, that Guy N. Woods believed the same as we did and had stated as much in his *Q & A* book, Jimmy Parker declared that he and others would withdraw their fellowship from brother Woods also (at least they were attempting to be consistent, which is more than can be said for some). It was at that time that Jerry Moffitt came to believe what the Southwest elders and the rest now believe about this matter. However, brother Dub McClish was instrumental in settling brother Moffitt down and dissuading him from causing trouble in the church on this matter.

I find it interesting and somewhat humorous, but more than this very sad that the Southwest elders would in any way, form or fashion appeal to anything produced by Charlie DiPalma. All the present Southwest elders but one, Brett Gerhardt, were elders at the time I resigned my position with SWSBS. During my first year at Southwest, the elders had me to fire Charlie DiPalma from his position as instructor with SWSBS. Charlie believed in a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, was involved with Rudy Cane and others in the establishment of the congregation at Buda, Texas (As it was first known, later it became known as the Buda/Kyle congregation. Most of those that started the Buda congregation came out of the Southwest church.). Also, it had become known that DiPalma and Chuck Horner (of World Video Bible School) were more sympathetic toward the Christian Church preacher, Given Blakely's proposition in his debate in 1985 with Guy N. Woods on the manner or mode of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit than with brother Woods' proposition. As a passing note it is also interesting that Curtis Cates was a speaker on the 2006 Southwest Lectures that recently concluded. With Marion Taylor's attitude toward Curtis Cates (which brother Marion Taylor has had no problem making known to certain people) being what it has been since Barry Grider left Southwest for what he considered greener pastures at Forest Hill, one can see how political the Southwest, SWSBS, Forest Hill, TGJ, AP, and GBN moguls actually are. And, with the departure of Gary Colley from Southwest, Robert Taylor, Jr. canceled a speaking engagement with Southwest and possibly remains persona non grata at Southwest. But, never fear, with the political machinations of every description that are being practiced by some of our brethren (and the brethren herein noted are some of the wiliest and cunning politicians on the earth), if Curtis Cates can be welcomed back to Southwest then in time perhaps brother Taylor may be once again found in the Southwest pulpit. In view of all the other places it does not bother his conscience for him to go, we really do not know why brother Taylor ever turned Southwest down anyway.

These men and their comrades make a farce out of declaring that they are only motivated by God's Truth and for the sake of the Truth. It is a terrible thing to come to grips with the fact that some of those that we have looked upon from our youth as stalwarts of the faith and motivated only by God's Will are, in reality, weak-kneed fakes and charlatans. Among many of the tremendously sad parts in all of this is that the average church member will never be exposed to all

of the shenanigans instigated and propelled along by those who seem to be somewhat in the Lord's church. As sad as I am about these matters, I am glad that I learned the truth about many of these brethren before entering eternity. What a shame and disgrace to the cause of Christ. However, as the inspired apostle Paul wrote: "**For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you**" (I Corinthians 11:19).—Editor]

FROM THE ELDERS OF THE SOUTHWEST CHURCH OF CHRIST

"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" (Matthew 19:9).

Several brethren have asked us questions regarding our stand on the issue of fellowship as it relates to Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage. As overseers of the Southwest church of Christ, we would like to make known to members of the Southwest congregation, as well as interested brethren, our position regarding fellowship as it relates to the Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage issue currently affecting our area.

For many years, this eldership has maintained that any division or disturbance of fellowship between sound and faithful brethren (e.g. those who hold the view that fornication is the only reason for divorce with the possibility of remarriage, as taught in Matthew 19:9) is contrary to God's will. That is, as long as brethren continue to agree that fornication is the only scriptural reason for divorce, this eldership does not find any scriptural authority for drawing the lines of Christian fellowship. We do realize that some brethren differ regarding divorce as it relates to civil law, and this affects their understanding of the occurrent point-time of fornication. But these good brethren still hold to the original intent of Matthew 19:9 that "fornication" is the sole predication for any divorce that allows remarriage, and we at Southwest, have never made this difference of opinion a test of fellowship. We do oppose any public or private teaching concerning Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage which implies an unscriptural, nontraditional view (such as the position advocated by the late James D. Bales, etc.).

In view of the divisive efforts of a few brethren in our region, who are now seeking to make their position a test of fellowship, and who are encouraging others to view their "cause" as a fellowship issue, we wanted our position to be made known to our membership and to other concerned brethren. We, at Southwest, have long held to what has become known in our region as "The Traditional View" on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage. This view has been set forth from the Southwest pulpit for over fifty (50) years and has been written and well commented upon by faithful brethren associated with the Southwest congregation over the years, including Jerry Moffitt and Charlie DiPalma.

Brethren, we will not allow a few radical voices to threaten the unity of the apostolic Christian faith at the Southwest congregation. Nor will we allow these same few to willfully

misrepresent our position at Southwest. It is sad that what a non-issue was formerly is now being magnified and given “issue” status among a few who are seeking to divide faithful brethren on both sides. The continued rhetoric of division on this matter, by a few outside of the Southwest congregation, should be stopped and avoided. May we all give “diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

—Charles Cauley, Bert Powell, Jr., Brett Gerhardt,
Bill Siebert, Marion Taylor
8900 Manchaca Road
Austin, Texas 78748

A RESPONSE TO SOUTHWEST'S POSTURING ON MARRIAGE, DIVORCE, AND REMARRIAGE

DANIEL DENHAM

In a recent statement by the eldership of the Southwest church of Christ in Austin, TX, an attempt to obfuscate the current debate over the role of civil government on the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage was made with such brazen hypocrisy that it takes one's breath away. The statement, released to their congregation through their bulletin *The Southwestener*, purports to explain the eldership's “position regarding fellowship as it relates to the Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage issue...”

THE BASIC PROBLEM

But the basic problem with some statements is that they fail to coincide or harmonize with other statements, much less with overt actions. The eldership at Southwest conveniently ignores the salient fact that for the past three or so years they have had speakers on their lectureship who have gone out of their way to assault in the strongest of terms as error the opposing view with which they claim they can still maintain fellowship. They also conveniently ignore the public statements and posturing of their own preacher on the same matter in his Bible class.

They even ignore the recent meeting with the former eldership from Buda/Kyle, TX, and its aftermath. Though some of the facts of the discussion are in dispute, one clear fact did come forth in its aftermath. The Southwest eldership made copies **only of documents defending their specific position** relative to the role of civil government and other matters for the students of the Southwest School of Bible Studies, which they oversee, to study on the subject. *It is quite clear from such energies that they wanted the students to hear only one side.* One wonders, if the entire issue is such a “tempest in a teapot,” as their statement would have us to believe, then why did they not make available to the students any of the abundant materials that defend the opposing view? If we are all just one, big, happy brotherhood on this matter, as long as we hold fornication as being the only ground for divorce, then why fudge on the evidence? Why not make the evidence for the opposing view available to the students? It would seem to be the fair and proper thing to do in a matter of “opinion,” would it not? Or do the elders believe that the opposing view involves inherent dangers, which they, as the

shepherds at Southwest, seek to keep out of the school and the congregation? If so, then let them act on principle and say so! They will be the more respected for taking a stand. If not, then let them permit the free flow of ideas governed by earnest examination of the Scriptures to rule the day. And let them silence their own hounds!

STAN CROWLEY AND HIS COHORTS

Stan Crowley, a former student of the School of Bible Studies at Southwest, has averred that his own version of the view Southwest is promoting is so important that it *demand*s the dividing of congregations. He equates distancing with divorce and marriage with sexual intercourse. He still stands in good stead with his alma mater, despite the abundant evidence as to his own heretical ideas and efforts to encourage the school to practice their own version of distancing from him. Yet they have neither repudiated him nor his doctrine. Should it not also cross a reflecting mind for at least a millisecond as to just *where* his unusual views originated? The conflict at Buda/Kyle arose principally because of Stan's influence in the situation. History does mean something in understanding the events of the present.

But this brother is not the only graduate of the school defending some version of the “weak bond” view of marriage espoused at Southwest and openly attacking proponents of the opposing view. There are others who charge those of us who do not hold to their view as teaching a version of “the waiting game,” which the position does not imply. Some have gone so far as to claim that the opposing view is also a form of the “Pauline privilege” error. Such is the poverty of their own view that they must resort to such vain diatribes and epithets to bolster their case.

Some of their graduates also charge those who hold to the opposing view as teaching there are “loopholes” in God's marriage law and Matthew 19:9. They openly admit that they advise people involved in such cases to remain celibate, and **thus bind** their own scruples as obligations on their brethren, which claims are documented. Are we to conclude that this is the Southwest eldership's true conception of the means to true fellowship over this issue? Is it the idea that they and their students may say, teach, and bind what they will, but everyone on the opposing side needs to shut up? Is this their

idea of unity, fellowship, and peace?

A number of students from Southwest are just as virulent in their attack on those who will not accept their blanket assertions as any Holy Roller preacher ever dared be in their claims to the gift of tongues! I had a heated conversation with one of their graduates, Bryan Braswell, over the phone on this same issue almost a year ago. **He called me up** in order to accuse me and those who do not agree with him with teaching a doctrine akin to “once saved, always saved.” Does that sound like someone who views this as a matter of opinion? After making his attack, he had the hubris to suggest that those who did not hold to his view were actually the ones guilty of causing the division over it!

As to his silly assertions about “once saved, always saved,” one of three things must be the case with him. It must be that 1) either he does not really believe that our view parallels “once saved, always saved,” and thus he lied. Or it must be the case that 2) he does not understand the doctrine of “once saved, always saved,” which is an indictment of his instructors. Or 3) he does not believe that “once saved, always saved” itself is a fellowship issue. It is even possible that he holds to some combination of numbers 2) and 3).

Whatever may be the case with brother Braswell, one thing is certain. He does seem to be typical of several of Southwest’s graduates on this subject. It is their hobby. Jason Browning and Douglas Young have been among the more active voices in attacking the opposing view and urging their position on others. Again, this is documented. Some have publicly marked faithful brethren as “false teachers” over this issue. Ask brethren Mark Miller and Tim Kidwell of their own experiences in this regard, for simply teaching the opposing view! One other fact is equally certain. The charges and attacks made by their graduates have occurred over a period of years, and involve such varied graduating classes from the school as to be impossible to be simply a case of unfortunate and untutored coincidence. They did not invent this doctrine *ex nihilo*. They came up with it from somewhere – either in the school or in the Southwest church (or even both)!

IT IS A MATTER OF OPINION—OUR OPINION OR ELSE

With some of them it is self-evident that it is a matter of opinion **only as long as you hold to their opinion**. If you do not hold to it and dare question them about it, then *you* are the one who is divisive, unbalanced, unloving, and contentious. I have heard this refrain for some 30 years from the ultra-left (some of them are masters of it!), and now it has taken form in the cantatas and operettas of the “middle-of-the-roaders.” They evidently believe that I Peter 3:15 and I Thessalonians 5:21-22 are just good suggestions for more convenient seasons. The idea of “balance” among some seems to involve a leftward limp.

To cry aloud for the maintaining of fellowship over the issue, while at the same time sending out students and/or promoting speakers who attack the opposing view is not only questionable, but bespeaks of hypocrisy of the worst sort. The reason for this is that such does not involve them in the obligation to defend their own views. They hide instead

behind the duck blind, while they sanctimoniously snip and snipe at others. All the while they cry for unity, fellowship, and peace, and carry out their own clandestine war over the matter. They make an issue over it being an issue, while fueling the situation with their own brand of hypocritical, judgmental rhetoric, the likes of which would make the most brazen liberal proud! Their strident tones and abrasive manners, however, belie their feigned “sweet spirits.”

WHOSE TO BLAME?

The elders at Southwest may try to blame the speakers on their lecture programs for their speeches, but are not the elders at Southwest in charge of what is preached during their lectures and for what is published in the books? They may also blame their preacher or the school’s teachers for indoctrinating the students and urging them forward with their views, but are not the elders the overseers of both? Or, have the instructors been running the school and the preacher the congregation? The elders at Southwest act like this matter arose in a vacuum without any prompting by their charges!

In their statement, the Southwest elders further aver that they hold to the “Traditional View” on the subject of MDR. They claim:

This view has been set forth from the Southwest pulpit for over fifty (50) years and has been written and well commented upon by faithful brethren with the Southwest congregation over the years, including Jerry Moffitt and Charlie DiPalma.

By this do they, perhaps, refer to the teaching of Jerry Moffitt on the subject *while he was director of the School of Bible Studies*? I have evidence that suggests a very definite shift on brother Moffitt’s part on this subject, which implies a shift also in the position of the Southwest eldership, despite their current claims. It is not likely that the eldership’s statement refers to Moffitt’s view at the time he was the school’s director, because this material was not passed out to the students in the school!

Does the eldership’s statement actually refer to *Moffitt’s lecture at their annual lectureship in 2004*, when he affirmed that God does not really join anyone in marriage and also denounced the opposing view in strident tones, saying that it “starts off strange and then gets worse”? He illogically asserts that “many reasonable, but unscriptural arguments” are offered for the opposing view, as though proper reasoning and the Scriptures are at odds with one another. Is this the “Traditional View” of which the SW elders speak? This was the material passed out to the students. Strange, indeed!

Charlie DiPalma’s article, to which the elders’ statement also refers, affirms the specific view that *man can effectually put asunder what God has joined together*. Is this supposed to be “the Traditional view?” Are the elders at SW willing to have that tested in actual discussion bearing on the historical evidence of the case?

Brother DiPalma’s article, as does brother Moffitt’s lecture, openly ridicules the opposing view. He subtly insinuates that the “waiting game” is involved in the opposing view. He openly accuses those who hold to the opposing view as *adding* to the Word of God, and then observes, “However, we know

that God absolutely forbids us to add to or take away from his word and He tells us that the consequence of doing so is eternal condemnation.” Thus, he implies that to believe and practice the opposing view entails “eternal condemnation.” How can the Southwest elders possibly view the matter as not being a fellowship issue, when they imply by agreement with DiPalma that the opposing view is causing souls to be eternally damned? Are they saying more about what they practice than they really wish to relative to fellowship? Do they believe that they can knowingly fellowship those who hold to, teach, and/or encourage the practice of a doctrine that will cause folks to suffer “eternal condemnation”? Or is their statement utterly hypocritical in nature? While they profess that this is not to be a test of fellowship, are they the ones in reality who wish to do the withdrawing first, if at all? Is this really an example of the kind of unity that the Southwest eldership has in mind – isolating those who would oppose their doctrine, while imposing it upon unsuspecting churches through the school’s graduates? Any doctrine that impacts the salvation of souls must most assuredly be a fellowship issue. It is disingenuous then for the Southwest elders to affirm that they do not consider this to be such an issue, while – **AT THE VERY SAME TIME AND IN THE VERY SAME STATEMENT** – affirming that they also agree fully with the DiPalma article that unequivocally declares it to be just that, a fellowship issue! As an old saying has it, “I was born in the morning, but it was not yesterday morning!”

DiPalma further claims that he is taking Jesus “literally and without addition or subtraction” in his exposition of Matthew 19:6-9. However, he does not explain how a woman as per the specific text has the authority to put away her husband at all! The text **specifically** says nothing about a woman putting away her spouse as he asserts. It deals “literally and without addition or subtraction” with the case of *a man* – any man – *putting away his wife*. **To be certain, a woman does have the right to put away her spouse, if he is guilty of fornication.** But *how* did brother DiPalma arrive at his conclusion that she could? He really does not say. The fact is he did so by force of **implication** (cf. Mark 10:11-12). Some implications *relative to other matters* in Matthew 19:9 (and the parallel of Mark 10:11-12) are actually ignored by DiPalma. Had he properly noted and abided by them, he would not have so terribly blundered into his conclusions. He thus makes his boast far too soon.

The following should be carefully observed: 1) the verb rendered “commits adultery” implies *something* relative to the circumstances surrounding the sinful remarriage. What is it that is implied? DiPalma has lockjaw on the matter. He needs to define the verb and explain what is involved in the crime of adultery as concerns *all* of the parties affected by it. 2) He ignores the fact, subsequently, that the Mark 10:11 parallel specifically identifies a particular victim of the crime. The Lord said, it is done “against her.” DiPalma needs to address the identity of the person so described before concluding he has this matter tidily wrapped up. His article commits the fallacy of special pleading by ignoring the force of implication (implicit statement) in the Scriptures. 3) He needs to examine his position relative to Matthew 19:9 and its bearing on other texts, especially such passages as Malachi 2:14-16; Romans 7:2-3; I Corinthians 7:10-11, 39; and Mark 6:17-18. He needs

to address the syntax of each and show how they harmonize with one another. Instead, he takes Matthew 19:2-9, and like a “faith only” Baptist preacher abusing John 3:16 or Ephesians 2:8-9, asserts this is all one needs to know and understand to be right relative to marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

“A FEW RADICAL VOICES”—SOUNDS LIKE THE WRITING OF JOSEPH MEADOR

The Southwest elders go on in their statement to demonize their opponents as “a few radical voices.” They say of themselves that, “**we** will not allow” such “**to threaten** the unity of the apostolic Christian faith at the Southwest congregation.” Amazing, how they cry for peace on one hand and give a slap in the same motion! Cled Wallace said of certain in his day that, “They carry sugar in one hand and acid in the other. If you will not eat their sugar, then they splatter you with their acid!” Yea, verily!

The Southwest elders state further, “It is sad that what was formerly a non-issue is now being magnified and given ‘issue’ status among a few who are seeking to divide faithful brethren on both sides.” Yet, the facts speak for themselves. This “non-issue” became such principally because of the efforts to disseminate their doctrine in an aggressive manner to the brotherhood through their lectureship and students. Contrary to their claims, we who oppose their teaching did not start this controversy. We are not “the troublers of Israel.” The epicenter of this dispute in Texas is located clearly in Austin, 8900 Manchaca Road!

Their statement reads further, “The continued rhetoric of division on this matter, by a few outside of the Southwest congregation, should be stopped and avoided.” Are they now calling for the withdrawal of fellowship from those who will not acquiesce to their views? Hmm. The statement seems at total odds with their lovely platitudes! Or, is this where they were headed all along? Is it a case of stirring up the issue, but then crying, “Foul,” when it is challenged? If they sincerely believe that they are teaching the truth on the issue why do they not defend it openly in the arena of the free exchange of ideas by agreeing to an oral or written debate, as good brethren have done over the years? Or, is debating beneath them? Do they consider debating a “puking contest,” as one well-known liberal of recent years has described it?

Whether they will admit it or not, the simple fact is that the view they oppose, regarding the role of civil government in MDR, has been **by far** historically the most predominant among our brethren. Brethren through the years maintained that God’s law was always supreme and decisive, regardless of man’s law. The words of Peter in Acts 5:29 still read the same way they did when Luke by inspiration penned them almost 2000 years ago. It is a shame that the Southwest elders and staff (as well as other brethren) will not apply this text to the MDR issue. If this text has any relevance at all to *any* issue, surely it *must* have relevance to MDR. **If not, then to what would it ever have relevance in practical application?** The text is nothing less than a watershed impacting and defining the role and limits of civil government under God’s Law. We are ready, willing, and able to defend what we believe in this matter from the Scriptures. Shall the Southwest elders and their charges be as forthcoming?

—607 72nd St.
Newport News, VA 23605

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE ELDERS OF THE SOUTHWEST CHURCH OF CHRIST

DANIEL DENHAM

Elders
Southwest Church of Christ
8900 Manchaca Rd.
Austin, TX 78748-5399

Dear Brethren,

Due to events of the past several years in general and specific events in recent weeks, I am writing to offer a challenge to the eldership and preacher of the Southwest church and to the faculty of the School of Bible Studies to debate publicly the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage that divides us. Despite your recent statement to the contrary in *The Southwester*, it is clear from the behavior of both you and your preacher, brother Rick Brumback, that you consider the issue over the role of civil law in this matter, and especially your view of it, to be a fellowship issue. A number of the graduates of the School of Bible Studies have falsely charged the opposing view as teaching the “waiting game.” Where did they get that notion? It is too widespread and involves different graduating classes among them to be coincidental. They have charged us who do not hold your view with spreading liberalism, teaching that there are “loopholes” in Matthew 19:9, and such like. They boast that they would warn people against it as sinful and urge them to remain celibate, if their individual case involved such concerns. That *implies* that they are binding it upon others. These are documented. In his lecture at Southwest in 2004, Jerry Moffitt said that it was “similar” to the “waiting game” error, and denounced it as a dangerous view. This was done under **your** watch. The assignment and rationale for the lecture was given by **your** preacher, who surely knew what was in the manuscript beforehand at the very least! You share in the culpability of this matter. You cannot call people false teachers in 2004, et al. and then when challenged suddenly aver that this should not be a fellowship issue. Also, the destructive consequences of your doctrine show that these things are indeed matters of faith, despite whatever posturing some may try to do.

While no right thinking person wants to authorize marriages that God does not authorize, it is equally true that no right thinking person should forbid or break up marriages that God has authorized! We are dealing with the word of God, as well as the lives and souls of real people. **We must be right about these matters.** There can be no optional course between our views. These views are mutually exclusive. They both cannot be right. I understand that you have in hand a copy of my response to the false assertions and dangerous error of your preacher regarding Matthew 19:6, so that you know that such is the case.

The Southwest church has had a noble history in the defense of the faith. Your late and beloved preacher, W.N. (Bill) Jackson, was a staunch and valiant defender of the faith and held a number of debates (both oral and written) while serving in said capacity. You brethren had no problem endorsing his efforts against John Edwards relative to the subject of divorce and remarriage – and rightly so! Jerry Moffitt, when he served as the director of the school, participated in a number of debates and edited *Thrust*, a journal dedicated to the defense of the gospel. On a number of occasions he addressed matters pertaining to divorce and remarriage. Guy N. Woods, one of the most experienced and accomplished debaters ever in the Lord’s church, was honored to be a part of your annual lectureship and fully endorsed the school’s stand for the truth “as it is in Christ.” You even honored him for his many services to the church, including his efforts in debate. Your website bears his letter of recommendation for the school, a recommendation that he would rescind given your current views, as he held the view which your preacher has implicitly marked as fatal error. Were Woods alive today, he would most surely urge you to take a stand one way or the other. Either give up your doctrine on the subject or defend it! The Scriptures themselves enjoin upon us all – including you as the shepherds over the flock at Southwest – to defend the faith (Philippians 1:17; I Peter 3:15; I John 4:1; et al.).

It is therefore in the interest of truth, the salvation of souls, and the future of the home as God would have it to be, this challenge is sent to you. If you reject the idea of an oral debate, then a written debate would be acceptable. However, the debater that you choose must have the endorsement of the Southwest eldership, regardless of whether the debate is oral or written. Brother David Brown has kindly consented to represent the propositions I have signed below on his and *Contending For The Faith’s* behalf for the oral debate. I will assist brother Brown as his moderator. If a written debate should materialize, I will be the respondent. The specific details for a written debate can be worked out later.

As concerns an oral debate, I suggest the following: 1) The Southwest building, due to its size, location, and facilities, would provide an excellent venue. 2) The debate should be recorded and eventually, if possible, printed for future reference. 3) The debate should consist of four nights with each speaker in the affirmative two nights with

three speeches of 20 minutes each. 4) Other details can be ironed out in further negotiations and a mutually agreeable format put into place for all parties involved. As to the propositions, they should be as follows:

1) Resolved: The Scriptures teach that when a husband and wife bound together in a Matthew 19:6 marriage obtain a divorce on trivial grounds (not for fornication), the marriage bond still exists.

Affirm: _____
(Daniel Denham or representative of *Contending For The Faith*)

Deny: _____
(Rick Brumback or representative of Southwest)

2) Resolved: The Scriptures teach that when a husband and wife bound together in a Matthew 19:6 marriage obtain a divorce for any cause (including trivial grounds), the marriage bond is totally severed.

Affirm: _____
(Rick Brumback or representative of Southwest)

Deny: _____
(Daniel Denham or representative of *Contending For The Faith*)

Other arrangements and rules can be worked out between the principal disputants. If the affirmative proposition for Southwest's representative (proposition number 2) is not satisfactory, then alter it accordingly to reflect your position more precisely.

This issue affects the lives of many good people. We shall see how seriously the Southwest eldership, her preacher, and the faculty at the School of Bible Studies take the charge, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21). I eagerly await your response and look forward to an airing of these extremely consequential matters for brotherhood unity and the sake of truth.

Yours in Christ,
/s/ Daniel Denham, evangelist
607 72nd St.
Newport News, VA 23605
(757) 245-6866

CC: David Brown, *Contending For The Faith*

FREE CD AVAILABLE

Contending for the Faith is making available a CD-ROM free of charge. Why is this CD important? ANSWER: It contains an abundance of evidentiary information pertaining to Dave Miller's doctrine and practice concerning the re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders, MDR, and other relevant and important materials and documents directly or indirectly relating to the Brown Trail Church of Christ, Apologetics Press, Gospel Broadcasting Network, MSOP, and more.

To receive your free CD contact us at Contending for the Faith, P. O. Box 2357, Spring, TX 77383-2357, or email us at cftfdpb@gmail.com.

If you desire to have a part in the distribution of this important CD you may make your financial contributions to the Spring Church of Christ, P. O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383

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Open Forum and CFTF 2006 Lectures DVDs, CDs, and Video Tapes Available through Green's Video Service —

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Green's Video Service has the audio and video recordings from the Spring Church of Christ's *CFTF* Lectureship on Anti-ism and the Spring Open Forum. The Open Forum was conducted by Dub McClish, David B. Watson, Michael Hatcher. It was hosted by the Spring elders. The Open Forum pertained to TGJ, TGJ Board, Dave Miller's doctrine of elder reevaluation and reaffirmation, MSOP, AP, GBN, Stan Crowley, SWCOC, MDR, and related matters. If you wish to obtain any of those recordings contact Jim Green at 2711 Spring Meade Blvd., Columbia, TN 38401, 931-486-1364, www.jgreencoc-video-ministry.com or email at jgreencoc1986@yahoo.com — Editor.

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[The following article originally appeared on pages 10 - 12 in the June 1995 issue of *CFTF*. It thoroughly answers and refutes those critics who get beside themselves because we speak candidly, frankly, and specifically—and, yes, we even call names. Furthermore, it also answers the Barry Grider's, Joseph Meador's, the present day Curtis Cates, AP, GBN, and all the so-called spiritually "balanced" brotherhood who are much chagrined by our use of sarcasm in our writings as well as our unwillingness to play the game of "Ignore his sin, for he's my friend and he is a member in good standing in our 'buddyhood'."

Yes, there was a time when Curtis Cates would defend in writing the actions of MSOP and do so on the basis of what the Bible teaches. But, we suppose he wrote the following article when he, from his present "balanced" perspective, was spiritually "unbalanced." In becoming more "balanced" brother Cates', along with the rest of the MSOP faculty, as well as several other brethren, have spiritually matured to the point of defending Dave Miller, Stan Crowley, Joseph Meador, and company in their erroneous conduct and teaching. Thus, today Cates and his MSOP faculty sound and act more like Glover Shipp (the brother he scripturally answered and correctly exposed in the following 1995 article) in the way they are dealing with error in and among their "buddyhood." Never-the-less, Cate's article truly reveals the way to biblically oppose and refute error while upholding and extolling the Truth of God's Word. What a shame that some people think that calling good evil and evil good is "balanced" thinking and preaching. No matter, we continue to stand with the Truth as presented by brother Cates in 1995. And, we ask brother Cates and the rest of his company, who has moved? We predict that brother Cates will do less and less of the kind of writing he did in the following article. —Editor]

CALLING NAMES AND JUDGING UNRIGHTEOUSLY —THE CHRONICLE "ANALYSIS" OF THE 1995 MEMPHIS SCHOOL OF PREACHING LECTURESHIP CURTIS A. CATES

The *Christian Chronicle*, June, 1995, page 28, specifically GS [I take it to be Glover Shipp, Managing Editor] "analyzed" our recent lectureship, which theme was, "**Heaven's Imperative or Man's Innovations: Shall We Restructure the Church of Christ?**" He did not attend the lectureship, but says he read the 850 page book. He did quite a commendable job in reviewing the excellent speech by brother Bobby Duncan "Shall We Restructure the Church?"

"NAME-CALLING"

Brother Shipp wrote that he saw "a strong tendency toward name-calling and accusing." He questioned whether the speakers had done so in a "kind way or sarcastically," and

whether the speakers "went first in every case to those they accused, in the spirit of New Testament teaching on dealing with differences between brothers in the faith."

1. What is wrong with accusing, brother Shipp? Do not the Scriptures accuse, and cannot one show wherein they do accuse (John 5:45-47)? Can an elder be accused (I Timothy 5:19)? Do not we try the spirits (I John 4:1? Did not Paul accuse and expose the Judaizers (Galatians 2:4, 5), and even accuse and rebuke Peter and other Jewish members of the church (Galatians 2:11-14)? *That is the spirit of New Testament teaching, if done in love for God, Christ, the Word of God, the bride of Christ, and the souls of men, and Paul did it!*

2. What is wrong with name-calling, brother Shipp? Is it never warranted, mandated, and scripturally appropriate? Shall we castigate John the Baptist (Matthew 3 :7), or Christ (Matthew 5:20; 16:6,12; 23:23; 12:34; 7:15; Revelation 2 :6, 15, 20), or Paul (I Timothy 1:20 ; II Timothy 2:17; 4:10,14 ; I Corinthians 5:1-13; 1:11)? How do we fulfill the command to "**mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and turn away from them**" (Romans 16:17) without naming them?

3. What is wrong with using sarcasm at times, brother Shipp? Is it never appropriate? Did Job use sarcasm (Job 12:2; 21:3; 26:2, 3)? Did God use sarcasm (Judges 10:14)? Did the prophet Elijah use sarcasm (I Kings 18:27)? Sarcasm is sometimes justified and very appropriate, a powerful literary device . (See Dungan, *Hermeneutics*, pp. 316-319.)

4. Are you certain brother Alexander Campbell never used sarcasm or called names, brother Shipp? I was shocked that you used him as an "example" with Christ, one in whose debates you wrote, "I have never found the least hint of name-calling or sarcasm." Brother, have you never read over several lines from Campbell's debates? The Campbell-Owen debate, which is before me, hardly started before brother Campbell chided Owen for making arguments as remote from the proposition "as would be the history of a tour up the Ganges," material of "no legitimate bearing" (p. 36). Note further from Campbell, "It seems a very hard matter, indeed, to reason logically when we have nothing to reason against ...nothing pertinent in Mr. Owen's last address" (pp. 72, 73). Space forbids noticing his much additional sarcasm. Note the Campbell-Rice Debate, which is before me. Campbell said, "He (Rice - CAC) has given us a few of the dry remains of some old harangues or lectures upon total depravity, which he may have preached around the country I know not how many times" (p. 640); "When he (Rice) will rise, he may tell you with a smile, 'Well, I cannot please my friend, Mr. Campbell, nor do I expect to please him.' Mighty logic, indeed! Unanswerable argument, truly! Alas—as my friend would say—alas! for the cause that depends upon such logical legerdemain! [trickery, hocus- pocus, sleight of hand CAC] (p.641); speaking of the clapping displays of an earlier debate, Campbell said, "As an improvement [in the Rice debate—CAC], I learn a laughing committee has been organized, with a clerical fugleman [guide or leader—CAC], at whose signal certain persons are to smile a little broad, and thus encourage my worthy friend!" (p.642). These examples of sarcasm could be multiplied in the Owen and Rice debates

but also in the Campbell-Purcell and Campbell-Maccalla Debates, also before me. Was this restricted to his debates? Absolutely not! Please see his name-calling and sarcasm in the following statement in the *Millennial Harbinger*, 1840, p. 93, “Since our debate, the Bishop has been to see the Pope; and, no doubt, has received his reward for his apology for the deformities of the Papal hierarchy.” Did Campbell ever call the brethren’s names? Often. One example will suffice. Jesse B. Ferguson was a great gospel preacher in Nashville who later departed from the truth. Brother Campbell powerfully—and by name—exposed him and his false teaching in the *Millennial Harbinger*. He cited the minutes from “Ebenezer church, 15th October, 1853,” which stated, “. . . we have no affinity for his view on that subject [Universalism—CAC] .” Campbell wrote, “That Mr. Ferguson should seek to retain any position amongst us, is irreconcilable with any other view than that he intends to create a party in favor of Universalism.” He stated further that one has the liberty in this country to teach his own convictions. “But we must hold it incompatible with candor and honesty, guilefully to hold a place amongst us.” He questioned “how any church amongst us” could use as a preacher (1854, pp. 54, 55). Brother Campbell would have agreed with brother William Woodson about the “Change Agents”—“It is time for them to go.” Campbell said in the *Harbinger* (1854, pp. 222, 223) that from the “first development” of his doctrine, “we clearly saw that he was no longer at home with us. We have nothing personal with any one who changes his creed or *his* position.” His next statement reminds us of Rubel Shelly’s excellent article years ago, “Oh, For an Honest False Teacher!” (*Gospel Advocate*, May 6, 1971). Campbell said, “But we question both the honor and

the morality of any one who disguises his intentions or his views, in equivocal terms or deeds, in order to occupy a false position, and to retain the confidence of those who have no fellowship with his doctrine or his spirit.” He affirmed that to continue with Ferguson [or any other such false teacher] was to demonstrate “their attachment to a man rather than to the gospel which they once professed,” and thus to have departed from the spirit and “have yielded to the flesh.” Campbell continued to “claim the privilege of defending the Bible” against Ferguson’s false teaching. Like the Memphis School of Preaching, when we warned against the change agents and restructuring the church, brother Campbell was castigated when he exposed Ferguson. In an article entitled “The Fall of Mr. J. B. Ferguson,” Campbell wrote,

We were censured by a few old friends in Nashville, for our early expose of the apostasy of Mr. Ferguson, as clearly indicated to my mind then as it is now, so far, at least, as principle is concerned. We saw as clearly then as we do now, the gulf of skepticism into which he had fallen...Let us all be admonished from such displays of human frailty, and let him who thinks that he stands firmly on the Rock of Truth, take heed lest he fall (*Millennial Harbinger*, 1855, pp.636, 637).

[NOTE: Do you see any name-calling (sic)?]

5. Have you ever called any names, brother Shipp? Indeed, you talked about the fifty-five speakers of the lectureship, you named the Memphis School of Preaching and Knight Arnold, you named specifically brother Bobby Duncan, and you did not come to **even one** of us . Really, you did no wrong in that, because the Bible has no such regulation. BUT, you did violate **your own law** you have made. Some-

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one has said, “**Thou that condemnest another, condemns thyself first?**” (Cf., Romans 2:1).

Brother **Guy N. Woods** said about those who would misapply Matthew 18:15-27,

It is disturbing that many brethren these days have no hesitancy in taking texts out of their contexts, and using them utterly without regard to the purpose that prompted the statements...

Even the most casual examination of Matthew 18:15-17 will show that our Lord had under consideration offenses of a personal nature, occasions where one brother has suffered injury of one kind or other at the hands of another brother in the congregation; it has not the slightest reference to, nor may it be properly applied to those instances where erring brethren have propagated false doctrine to the detriment of the cause of Christ itself.

It is a gross misapprehension of Matthew 18:15-17, to offer it as a rule of procedure in dealing with instances where false doctrine is being advocated to the disruption of the cause and to the destruction of the souls of men, and them that do so fall into grave sin themselves. (*Questions and Answers, II, pp. 55-57*).

“GOING FOR THE ‘JUGULAR’

“If we can follow his [Campbell’s] example and the teaching of Christ on brotherly relations, rather than going for the ‘jugular,’ we will make progress toward unity,” wrote brother Shipp. Why did “going for the ‘jugular’ become apart of his analysis? Did he suspect, did he surmise that the fifty-five speakers showed a vicious, mean, bitter, ugly, unloving spirit? Let me assure him that not one of them was unlike the Christ in attitude and spirit—or in doctrine.

Speaking of love, what did Paul say of love? “... **thinketh no evil**” (I Corinthians 13:5), What does this word “**thinketh,**” or “**imputeth,**” or “**taketh not account of**” mean? Does it not mean putting the best construction on brethren’s actions, not surmising evil (I Timothy 6:4), not assessing improper motives and/or purposes on brethren’s actions, charitable judgment? The Lord condemns uncharitable, unfounded, unsubstantiated, unrighteous judgment [including insinuations and innuendoes] (Matthew 7:1-5) and commands that we “**judge righteous judgment**” (John 7:24). Writing an “analysis” in a religious paper does not nullify one’s being governed by these principles of ethics and righteousness! All shall be judged by our deeds and words.

CONCLUSION

How ironic it was for a letter to the editor to state in the same issue of the *Chronicle* “Some may wonder, ‘Is it conservative?’ ‘Is it liberal?’ It’s a newspaper, folks. Neither conservative nor liberal, it just reports the news.” Boy, was his “testimony” wrong! The purpose and intent of the Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship is scripturally and in love to follow the Biblical accounts of inspired writers as they preached the Word (II Timothy 4:2), as they were set for the defense of the gospel (Philippians 1:16), and as they opposed and exposed false teaching, apostate brethren, and heretics (II Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15; Titus 3:10; et al.). Such analyses as appeared in the *Chronicle* shall not divert us from this noble and scripturally-mandated purpose. [*Amen, brother Cates. Such sentiments are CFTF’s also. —Editor*]

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[The following article also appeared in the June 1995 issue of *CFTF*, pages 12, 13. As it is in this issue of *CFTF*, the Coats article was placed directly after Curtis Cates’ article dealing with Glover Shipp’s article in the June 1995 *Christian Chronicle*.

We hope that the speakers at the 2006 MSOP Lectureship were more balanced than the Cates of yesteryear in his article that precedes this one. We are persuaded, until evidence is produced to the contrary, that the present day Wayne Coats continues to be what he always has been—a preacher of truth, who let’s the chips fall where they may without fear, favor, or any kind of respect of persons, schools, or whatever.—Editor]

A REPLY TO “GS” OF THE CHRISTIAN CHRONICLE

WAYNE COATS

In the June 1995 issue of the *Christian Chronicle* there is an analysis made of the 29th Annual Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship, signed, GS. Of all the speakers and subjects discussed during the Lectureship, GS analyzed a “representative speech” by Bobby Duncan who spoke on *Shall We Restructure the Church?*

The incredulity of GS is so completely glaring to even a tyro when he opines, “I also see in the speeches a strong tendency toward name-calling and accusing. Only the speakers and those who heard them know if this was done in a kind way or sarcastically. And only the speakers (and the Lord) know if they went first in every case to those accused, in the spirit of New Testament teaching on dealing with differences between brothers in the faith”

I was one of over fifty speakers, who addressed audiences of the MSOP Lectureship, and I would like for GS to be strong, courageous, and a person of unwavering integrity long enough to answer a few simple elementary matters. As a speaker, I called names and made some accusations. Now pray tell why this is wrong for me to do this, but right for GS? GS accused

some of accusing, and is he so blind as not to see that which is so obvious?

GS made reference to Bobby Duncan eight different times in his brief analysis. Shame, shame! He called brother Duncan's name. Did he go to Bobby Duncan, the accused, before he wrote his piece? GS accused others of calling names and set forth an opinion which he is unwilling to observe. Why? With such arrogance, whatever else GS says is sheer poppycock gone to seed.

So GS sees in the speeches "*name calling and accusing*" but he popped off without going to all those accused. Does he make laws for others which he is unwilling to observe? Please remember, "Larger boats may venture more but little boats should stay near shore."

Please let the reader take notice that another blow was landed when GS wrote, "*And only the speakers and those who heard them know if this was done in a kind way or sarcastically*." Well, I do not expect GS to apply the rule to himself. No, never, and of course not! When GS pops off about the speakers, how do we know whether he was kind or sarcastic? It matters not one whit to me what kind of speech the Chronicle writer uses. Maybe with Emerson he thinks, "*Consistency is the hob-goblin of little minds*." We have noticed for years that consistency in the thought process is something with which the liberal never seems to be concerned.

In my lectureship speeches I used kindness and also sarcasm and I beg, plead, implore and insist that GS move forward and make an attempt to show that accusing, along with sarcasm per se, is sinful. Moreover, it appears that GS has come to rely upon that liberal crutch which is a handy prop for religious cowards who refused to make any effort at

defending the faith. Oh, but they can write about going to those accused, "... *in the spirit of New Testament teaching on dealing with differences between brothers in the faith*" Will someone please explain why this weak, sickly, fool-hardy explanation has never been used by self-respecting brethren in days gone by? Why is it such a useful crutch for the far-out liberals? 'Tis easier for some to hobble on a crutch while fleeing than to stand and defend the truth of my God.

To attempt the use of Matthew 18:15ff to curtail the exposure of error doesn't make even good nonsense. The passage refers to personal matters between brethren. Up until the upsurge of liberalism in recent years, it just seemed that everyone knew the truth within the passage.

Will someone please try to inform GS that it is not "*brotherly relations*" but disrespect for the authority of God's Word that is destroying the unity among God's people and that disrespect is nowhere demonstrated more openly than through the pages of such papers as the *Christian Chronicle*? "**Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth**" (Romans 14:23).

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Addendum: I challenge GS or any other person connected with the *Christian Chronicle* to meet me in either a public or written discussion as to the meaning of Matthew 18:15-17. [Signed] Wayne Coats

FELLOWSHIP AND GBN

GARY W. SUMMERS

Some very disturbing events have occurred within the body of Christ during the past year, concerning which all who are Christians, interested in the unity of the church, have been mortified. Brethren who have worked together for years (and in some instances, decades), building up the body of Christ and fighting against liberalism, are no longer speaking to each other. It has been sad to watch close relationships deteriorate and dissolve before our very eyes. Even as recently as a year ago, if anyone would have predicted this kind of estrangement, he would have immediately been branded a false prophet. Nevertheless, breaches in friendships have occurred.

However, in the midst of all the hurt feelings and unkind comments—no one initially announced any withdrawals of fellowship, which was a blessing, since it is frequently a good idea to sit back and evaluate situations, allowing time for people to rethink what they and others have said and done. Certainly, it is easier for regrets and reconciliation to occur if no one has made a public statement in regard to an individual or a congregation. Brethren on both sides of *The Gospel Journal* controversy are to be commended for not making the issue a matter of fellowship—at least, not officially. Many have

friends in both groups of differing brethren, and they did not wish to alienate anyone unnecessarily on what most perceived to be a judgment matter, even though many considered *TGJ* Board's actions to be unwarranted and unkind.

Fellowship with God is a fundamental right and privilege that comes with being a Christian. As virtually all brethren know, when our sins are forgiven (at the time we repent and are baptized for the forgiveness of them), we enjoy fellowship with God and with our brothers and sisters. This relationship persists unless someone enters into sin and refuses to exit it. If that individual is warned of his wickedness and he refuses to repent of it, then the church has no recourse but to withdraw fellowship from the impenitent brother.

Such an important step cannot be taken lightly. First of all, the offense must be real, not imagined. Sometimes, when decisions are made, people come away with different perspectives of what happened. When I resigned, for example, from working with one congregation, I went away to interview with another church on a particular Sunday. On that same day, another preacher visited, preached, and met with the men. Upon returning, I was told that the man had been hired.

Another member, however, said he wished I would reconsider and stay there. Something was wrong. The men met the next Sunday, and it was discovered that there were not two but three versions of the previous meeting. Three men said that they had made the decision to hire the visiting preacher. Two said they had made no such decision, and another two or three said they had hired the man—but it was contingent upon me not remaining. How could all the men have been in the same meeting and come away with three different ideas? Miscommunication is not uncommon.

Jesus said that one individual should tell another his fault privately (Matthew 18:15-17); this practice enables two people to see if they have communicated properly. Others then accompany the offended party to verify that what he said was actually the case and not his own misinterpretation. After this verification has occurred, the church must be told of the impenitent brother and, in the absence of change, must withdraw from him.

The withdrawal of fellowship constitutes a severe step in the relationship between brethren and therefore should be done only after all reasonable efforts of maintaining fellowship have failed. Since Jesus is Lord and Head over His body, the church, withdrawing of fellowship must be done with His approval. In other words, it cannot be done merely because someone is angry with a brother over something he has done (a matter of judgment, for example). The church cannot withdraw from someone out of haste or in the absence of facts. If a person is willing to meet and discuss differences, then it is not the time to consider this option.

When a Scriptural withdrawal of fellowship does occur, then faithful brethren everywhere must (and will) recognize the action. Jesus said He would be in agreement with such withdrawals—if brethren followed the correct procedure (Matt. 18:18-20). Hardly anything can do as much damage as brethren ignoring the legitimate disciplinary action of the church. By refusing to recognize it, they diminish its effectiveness and undermine the purpose for doing it. The guilty party is likely to think, “I still have a few friends. Some may think I have done wrong, but I have others who are standing by me.”

So what do these things have to do with the current climate in the brotherhood? The elders of the Highland Church in Dalton, Georgia, who are overseeing the Gospel Broadcasting Network (GBN), recently took it upon themselves to announce the withdrawal of that congregation from the elders of the Northside Church of Christ in Calhoun, Georgia, and now brethren are forced to make a choice as to whether the elders in Calhoun are guilty of sin—or whether the elders at Highland sinned when they made this decision resulting in this withdrawal. Brethren all over the country must realize that either one group of elders or the other is wrong and that we no longer have a choice as to fellowshiping both groups. One of these elderships is in sin and needs to repent. Some are standing by those in Dalton; others are standing by those in Calhoun. Disagreements over certain things that once were categorized as matters of **judgment** now have been made an issue of **fellowship** by the action of the Highland elders. Whether or not those elders intended it to be so, their withdrawal cannot be confined to northwest Georgia—it affects

the entire brotherhood.

The Highland elders marked the elders of Northside in Calhoun because, in their judgment, they had “sown discord, promoted gossip, and caused an unnecessary breach in the unity of God’s people.” The main focus of these complaints (although others are mentioned) is the opposition the Northside elders have to the endorsement and defense of Dave Miller at GBN, since he has never repented of two false doctrines that he has publicly taught. In fact, it has been incredible to observe how many brethren (who are otherwise sound) have begun defending brother Miller in recent months. (For the record, no personal problem whatsoever with Dave. I have had satisfactory personal contact with him and have enjoyed hearing him preach.) Unfortunately, Miller refuses to say that it is wrong for congregations to re-evaluate and re-affirm elders. He was a leader in the process once and worked behind the scenes in favor of it a second time in the Brown Trail Congregation in Bedford, Texas. His teachings on this topic and on another (his defense of one who married his cousin solely in order to enter this country and then immediately divorced her) are a matter of record. Although Miller issued a statement regarding these two things a few months ago, it was by no means a statement of repentance (see Michael Hatcher’s and Dub McClish’s articles in the October *Defender* and Dave Watson’s in this publication’s November-December issue).

At the time of Dalton’s withdrawal from the elders in Calhoun, no one was spreading **gossip** concerning Dave Miller, unless showing people well-documented facts constitutes **gossip**. The Highland elders are the ones who have “caused an unnecessary breach in the unity of God’s people” and have “sown discord” by counting well-documented facts about Miller as “gossip.” Furthermore, Dave Miller has been slow in even addressing these matters. In 1997 brother Dub McClish exposed his leading part in the first elder re-evaluation and re-affirmation program at Brown Trail. This thoroughly documented material involving brother Miller was published in the 1997 Bellview Lectureship book (*Leadership*). Brother Miller has never made any response to this material. The church in Rowlett, Texas, (among others) protested Dave’s hiring by Apologetics Press in 2002. The Rowlett brethren had supported Apologetics Press very generously from its inception, yet when they voiced their concerns about Dave to brother Bert Thompson, Executive Director of Apologetics Press at the time, they were promptly—and rudely—rebuffed. Knowing that he has been under heavy criticism from faithful brethren for more than three years, Dave finally issued the previously-mentioned statement, which fell far short of repentance. How is it that, in the face of written, public evidence distributed widely and over such a long time-span, so many brethren are willing to overlook Dave’s errors? DOES FRIENDSHIP TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER TRUTH WITH SOME? DO BROTHERHOOD “POLITICS,” RATHER THAN PRINCIPLE AND INTEGRITY, GOVERN THEIR HEARTS?

Seeing this incongruity, I penned an article titled “The Poisoners,” which pointedly cautions brethren to avoid “taking sides” based on friendship; among other things I wrote: “Unfortunately, people take the word of a ‘friend,’ loved

one, preacher, or other trusted individual all the time without checking the facts for themselves.” I originally published it in the December 25th *Spiritual Perspectives*. It was also considered for publication in *The Gospel Journal*, so that it might have a broader circulation—but to date it has not been published. I believe that some brethren who have lined up behind brother Miller have done so without knowing or seeking to know all that they need to know. It is also evident, however, that some have lined up behind him **in spite of** the information they have—information that prevented their endorsement of him only a few months ago, which information has not changed. [I hoped that some of these brethren would read the article in *The Gospel Journal* and make application of its principles to themselves.]

When it comes to disputes among brethren, we ought to ask, “Who has been open and above-board?”; “Who has been willing to discuss the situation?”; “Who has provided documented evidence, as opposed to promoting hearsay?” Some brethren do not fare well when these questions are asked. In fact, some likely know that they would fare so poorly if they answered that they simply refuse to answer. It is easier to manipulate people through innuendo and personal assurances than with a presentation of facts, which many have allowed brother Miller to do to them. Many know, for example, of an unrelated situation in which meetings were recorded so that anyone could have a copy and know the truth of what occurred. All of those who attended the meetings were promised copies of the tapes. Those in charge of the tapes, however, reneged in making them available. Incredibly, many brethren stood by those who made that decision to suppress the truth!

The evidence against Dave Miller is plain and open to all. When the elders at Highland in Dalton withdrew fellowship from the Northside elders in Calhoun, in effect they withdrew from all of us who stand with the Northside elders in opposing Dave Miller until he repents and repudiates the errors he has committed. Likewise, all of those who stand with the Highland elders in their unscriptural withdrawal and in their endorsement of Dave Miller, have **implicitly withdrawn from the rest of us**. Many of us cannot recognize the withdrawal of the Highland elders in Dalton, Georgia, against the Northside elders in Calhoun, Georgia, who are standing for the Truth. The Highland elders need to understand that their withdrawal is also against the many faithful brethren who stand with the Northside elders. And if the Highland elders, GBN, and all who support GBN and Dave Miller choose not to fellowship the rest of us, they will surely have to give an account for that decision before our Lord and Savior.

[Editor’s note, with which GWS agrees: But, let us take it one step further: Since the Highland elders oversee GBN, and since one of the Highland elders is the Director of GBN, those who have jumped on the GBN bandwagon with their endorsements, praise, financial contributions, and such like must also withdraw from the rest of us who still stand where we stood a year ago. Sadly, those riding this bandwagon include such notables as the Forest Hill Congregation in Memphis and the Memphis School of Preaching faculty, along with numerous others of “repute.”

I greatly fear that GBN and the Highland Church in

Dalton, Georgia, are quickly assuming in one respect the role the “Herald of Truth” program of the Highland Church in Abilene, Texas, assumed several years ago. (I am not accusing GBN of teaching error in its programming, as Herald of Truth eventually did, although it follows that by endorsing and defending a false teacher, it would not be inconsistent to allow error to be taught on the air.) The parallel I fear is that GBN is already becoming the next monolithic brotherhood Goliath that says, “If you don’t get behind us or at least stay out of our way, we will run over you.” Have these brethren already, in their zeal to fund their immense program, assumed a position of being above question or criticism? None should mistake my concerns as some sort of “anti” position that opposes congregations cooperating to preach the Gospel.

My fear is that this program’s appetite for money has already become so large that its leaders have succumbed to the temptation to stop their ears and blind their eyes to a brother’s errors. In doing so, they have led many others to do the same. Where will this road, once started down, end?
—Editor]

THE POISONERS

GARY W. SUMMERS

About two weeks ago, on a national talk radio program, the host for that day described an incredible event. We have no way of verifying the details he provided; we will assume that the research and the information are accurate accounts of what occurred.

A woman and her husband were divorced and not getting along very well. She was living with their eight-year-old son. One day she left him alone, during the day, just long enough to get a test taken at a hospital. When she returned, he was gone. Though she had limited resources, she tried to locate him and his father but failed. Finally, after 30 years, a detective found where he lived. She traveled to the city and location.

She knew her son was inside; she did not know what would happen next. She had searched for her him for years; now she had found him, but what kind of reunion would this be? She left her car and knocked on the door. Perhaps her imagination was all over the place, considering the possible responses. Would her son be relieved at long last to find his mother, or would he ask her where she had been for the last 30 years? Needless to say, there was only one way to find out.

A female answered the door. The mother gave her son’s name to the woman and asked if this was his home. The woman said that it was. She asked if his birthday was a certain date, and the woman replied that it was. Then she acknowledged, “I’m his mother.”

From the back of the house came the demanding words, “Close the door!” The door was closed. The disappointed mother, heartbroken, returned to her car and left. Imagine waiting 30 years to be reunited with your son—and being treated with less courtesy than Jehovah’s Witnesses would probably have received. The mother said that, in a way, she was not surprised; she had reason to think that her former husband had poisoned their son against her.

Whose Fault Is It?

Most of us would probably accuse the husband of bringing about this horrible situation. Certainly, he has his share of blame. For 30 years he had poisoned his son against his own mother. What did he tell him all those years? Did he assert that the mother had abandoned the lad? Did he repeat this lie day in and day out so that eventually it became unquestioned? Did he produce some kind of bogus evidence? Perhaps he showed the boy a letter, written in feminine handwriting, that proclaimed something to the effect, "I am in love with someone, but a child would just be in our way. Therefore, I am giving the rearing of my child up to his father." Or, could it have been even worse? Might this imaginary letter have left him to a relative or to the state, in which case the father was able to rescue him, thus becoming the hero? Was there other corroborating evidence of the mother's alleged neglect or someone who claimed to verify all that had happened?

We do not know *the means* by which the father caused the son to think his mother was an evil person, but whatever he did, he succeeded completely. "**A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends**" (Proverbs 16:28).

Nevertheless, the son must bear a gigantic portion of guilt for being such a dolt. When a person fails to realize that he is being fed poison, the results are his own fault. To be sure, some are able to administer poison in very clever ways. "I'm your friend, and you know I hate to say anything bad about anyone, but..." The one who allows such drivel to affect his disposition toward someone is guilty of poisoning himself. The most amazing thing in the entire event described is captured in another proverb: "**The first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him**" (18:17). Why has it not dawned on the son that for 30 years he has only heard one side of the story?

Who taught him to be so one-sided? Who taught him to respond emotionally to his mother rather than to maintain some semblance of objectivity? Who taught him to be so rude? Could it have been his father?

Anyone who refuses to consider a different point of view, a different perspective, from the only one he has been receiving, deserves to be robbed of the blessings of being reunited with his mother. She does not, however, deserve this kind of treatment.

Unfortunately, people take the word of a "friend," loved one, preacher, or other trusted individual all the time without checking out the facts for themselves. Although this might work on little things of no major consequence, it is foolish to not hear both sides when something so important as a human relationship is involved. On the basis of a few allegations and some circumstantial evidence, Othello murders the innocent Desdemona. The play is not titled *The Tragedy of Desdemona*, however. She was innocent of any wrongdoing. The tragedy is that Othello believed the slander against her (which came from the villain, Iago).

How often has someone vilified another, knowing that individual had no opportunity to respond or perhaps never knew that he was a target in the first place? The mother, in the afore-mentioned example, could not respond to all of the charges against her because she was not present and did not even know what allegations were made toward her. How many people today do not have any idea what is being said against

them and therefore cannot offer a defense?

Manipulators can even twist good actions by ascribing evil motives to others who have no suspicion that they are under attack. A person might notice that a friend's affection has cooled but have no idea why this change has occurred. Someone has been busy poisoning the "friend's" mind so that he has now become convinced the victim of this assault is not the person he had always known him to be.

The tragedy is that people allow themselves to be misled when they really know better! Othello ought to have known Desdemona better than to have believed the malicious things Iago said against her. Christians especially ought to know one another better than to believe the worst about someone—especially when it is unsubstantiated. Surely, we are cleverer than that.

Communication is the only effective remedy to this problem. When derogatory things have been said about someone, the best thing to do is to go to that individual and say, "Do you mind if I ask you a couple of questions?" If the person is hostile or refuses to meet or talk or to answer a letter, then that will lend credence to the charges, but it just may be that the person is innocent and only needed an opportunity to know what was being said so as to be able to clear up the matter. Jesus recognized and taught this principle long ago (Matthew 18:15-17). Too bad the mother's son had never read this passage or (if so) failed to apply it.

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immoral. He did not go on to point out that Lipscomb had opposed the society before the civil war. Maybe this would have hurt the case he was making too much. As regards the underlying assumption of many that opposition to a Northern invasion of the South during the civil war/is a codeword for being pro-slavery, I ask you to listen to Lipscomb speak for himself. "Slavery was an incubus and hindrance to the Southern people... he went on to say that he was "at all times willing to surrender all my interests in it to see it abolished."²

Instead of listening to a Johnny come lately armchair historian; let us listen to one who was an eyewitness to the effects of the civil war on the Lord's body. Listen to these words from one of the most brilliant men of that time, Moses Lard,

But further, we, as a nation and as Christians, have just passed the fierce ordeal of a terrible war, a war in which passion ran to its height, and feelings became as ferocious as feelings ever get. We had many brethren on both the opposing sides. Many of our churches stood precisely where the carnival raged most. Yet not a rent in our ranks did the war produce. True, for the time being it cooled many an ardent feeling, and caused old friends to regard one another a little shyly. Still it effected no division.³

It was not the civil war that divided the church but the missionary society and the organ that cut asunder the body of Christ. When those who divided the Lord's body are ready to repudiate their positions and repent, we stand ready to welcome them with open arms under an American flag to which we pledge allegiance, not a confederate flag. The civil war did not divide the church of Christ.

BLUEPRINT OR PRELIMINARY DRAWINGS

The second point Atchley made was that there are two differing ways of viewing the Bible that led to this division (yes, I know point number two contradicts point one, but let's just pretend that it does not for a few minutes). He characterized the two ways as one side seeing the Bible as a blueprint, while the other side sees the Bible as preliminary drawings. He quickly admitted if the Bible was to serve as a blueprint, we cannot deviate from what it teaches. However, if the Bible was merely preliminary drawings each congregation must see best how to replicate the function (we might say generic authority) of the New Testament church without being concerned about the forms (we might say specific authority). I do not know of any person who would say that the Bible is merely a blueprint. The Bible is an amazing book containing a diversity of literature. It contains proverbs as well as the command to be baptized. I know of no one who does not admit these different types of literature must be treated differently in interpreting them if we "handle aright" the Word of Truth (II Timothy 2:15 ASV). However, it is also clear that at times the Bible sets forth what could be characterized as a blueprint for the faithful to follow. When the Bible speaks only to function, then only function is important. However, when the Bible addresses form and function, then the form as well as the function are important to God.

For example, in Genesis 6, had God told Noah only to make a way to escape the flood, then only the *function* would have been important. Noah would have probably made a large

boat of some kind, but he certainly would not have by his own intuition, made an ark just as he made it (cf. Genesis 6:22). However, God told Noah to make an ark of Gopher wood. Had God told Noah to make an ark of wood, it would not have mattered what kind of wood Noah used, but instead God *specified* the kind of wood to be used. Later God told Noah to make the ark 300 by 50 by 40 cubits in size. This meant that God was telling Noah something more than the *function* of a vessel that he was to make in order to escape the flood waters. He was also binding upon Noah the *form* of the ark.

Likewise, God could have said to man "Worship Jehovah in whatever way you see fit." This would have been marvelous for the change agents since this is what they want to do regardless of God's commands (Colossians 2:23). Instead God called on man to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). He told man to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in worship to Him (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). He did not simply say "make music," He told man what *kind* of music to make, singing. God requires "**the fruit of our lips**" not the Pentecostal shimmying of our hips (Hebrews 13:15).

Besides, the Bible does not sound like it is a very preliminary writing for men like Atchley to work out the details of it themselves. Have you ever received a preliminary drawing with these words attached,

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3)?

The word translated *once* there is *hapax*. It is used in other verses to refer not to the preliminary offering of Jesus until something better comes along, but to His once for all sacrifice on the cross (Hebrews 9:26, 28). It was His blood that sanctified this New Testament, so man has no right to tamper with it (Matthew 26:28).

The problem for Atchley's position is that the Bible is God's Word (II Timothy 3:16-17). When God wanted to change His Word to man He warned us that He would (Jeremiah 31:31ff) and then He changed it (Romans 7:1-4). Yet, even the Old Testament was not a preliminary drawing for those to whom it was addressed. It was their final authority as long as it was in force (cf. Hebrews 7:12ff).

Even if Atchley could prove that the New Testament was merely a preliminary drawing (which he cannot do, because it is not), it is the preliminary drawing of the church, which is the "house of God" (I Timothy 3:15). Since it is God's house, who would have to make the changes in it as we progress from the preliminary drawing stage to the blueprint stage? Jesus is the Son over the house and we are the house (Hebrews 3:6). Atchley is correct, the church is not merely an organization, but a living breathing organism. A body is, then, an apt description of the church (I Corinthians 12). However, it is a body under the control of the head, and that head is Jesus (Ephesians 5:23). No man alive has the authority to change God's drawings or blueprints to suit himself or the culture around him. God drew the lines on the blueprint and even Paul as a wise master builder had to be careful how he built (I Corinthians 3:10).

“A DIVISIVE WAY OF READING SCRIPTURE”

Thirdly, Atchely got around to attacking Biblical hermeneutics. He said, “I think we invented and we still use a divisive way of reading scripture.” He went on to attack what he called the “command, example, necessary inference hermeneutic.” If he made a case that there was something wrong with these it was because of the following: while the commands “were easy” we had to write books telling people when “an example was approved and when it wasn’t and when an inference wasn’t necessary and when it wasn’t.” *First*, this is not an accurate reflection of the way anyone I know reads Scripture. This is simply the way I go about asking if an action is authorized by God or not (cf. Colossians 3:17). *Second*, the more correct terminology would be implication not necessary inference. This is the case because God implies and man infers. God does the binding and loosing, in part, by what He implies, I can never bind and loose based on what I infer from Scripture. *Third*, Atchley along with the Christian Church preacher, Bob Russell, just wrote a book called *Together Again*. To follow his logic, the fact that he had to write a book telling the church of Christ how to fellowship the Christian church indicates that he is using “a divisive way of reading scripture.” Actually this is a case of a correct conclusion based on a flawed premise if I ever saw one.

Under this premise he went on to attack what he called the “authority of silence” which he defines as “if it’s not mentioned in the New Testament it is unauthorized, it’s forbidden.” His definition of this principle is woefully lacking. There are many things not “mentioned” in Scripture that are authorized by Scripture. This gets back to his failure to understand the difference in what he calls form and function. When Jesus told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15), He bound on us the function. Nowhere in Scripture are we told how to go, so the form of going has been left to our judgment. You may choose to go by a jet plane and some other preacher may choose to go by a Miata, but both are still going.

THE HEART OF THE DISAGREEMENT

Now this “authority of silence” really gets to the heart of the disagreement with liberals. They like to pretend to attack what John Mark Hicks calls our “trifold hermeneutic”. However, it is the Biblical doctrine of the silence of the Scriptures that makes them wring their hands. If his definition is a problem, his understanding of the application of this principle is even a bigger and worse one. He says that the way this has been applied is this, “if we have it it’s an aid but if you have it, and we don’t have it, it’s an addition.” This is a strong charge to make against the Lord’s body without evidence. Let us see how accurate this charge is. Denominations had vans and buses to bring people to worship before we did. We looked at that issue and generally determined that a van or bus was an aid to expedite Hebrews 10:25, not an addition. The whole question turns on what was discussed under Atchely’s first point. If God has given us an assignment (function) but has not told us by direct statement, example, or implication how to carry that assignment out, we are obligated to carry that assignment out as expediently as we can do.

Atchely asserts that this way of looking at the Bible goes back to men like J. W. McGarvey and Moses Lard, but this assumption is incorrect. As early as the second century some followers of Christ were divided from one another over this very point. Tertullian (AD 150-222) informs us that there were those who argued that “the thing which is not forbidden is freely permitted.” However this was not his view. He succinctly stated his conviction as, “I should rather say that what has not been freely allowed is forbidden.”

The debate concerning the silence of the Scripture is actually much older than the second century BC. In fact this debate concerning the silence of God is as old as the first family God placed on earth. Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-2). Both of these sons had a desire to worship God. As a result of this desire, both sons brought offerings to God: Cain was a farmer so he brought “**the fruit of the ground**” (Genesis 4:3); Abel was a shepherd so he brought “**the firstlings of his flock**” (Genesis 4:4). God found the offering of Able acceptable but he did not find Cain’s offering acceptable (Genesis 4:4-5). When we read what the New Testament has to say concerning this episode, the distinction between the actions of the two men becomes crystal clear. Abel made his offering to God “**by faith**” (Hebrews 11:4). We also know that anything done “**by faith**” is based upon God’s Word (Romans 10:17). So it is clear that God had told these men what kind of offering He would accept. Abel “by faith” chose to offer the thing that God had instructed him to offer. However, Cain decided to offer the thing that he found most appealing to himself, and as a tiller of the ground, this was the “**fruit of the ground**” from which no blood could be shed and by which his sins could not be atoned (Hebrews 9:22).

The Old Testament writers themselves had a healthy respect for the silence of the scriptures. Moses told the children of Israel that “**the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD**” (Deuteronomy 10:8). This passage served to authorize the Levites to carry the Ark of the Covenant. One will search in vain for a long list of tribes that were expressly prohibited from carrying the ark. No verse in the Old Testament says “Judah shalt not carry the ark of the covenant.” Even the Levites were not to touch the ark, but they were to bear the ark on poles that were placed in rings on the outside of the ark (Exodus 25:12-15). On one occasion David used a new cart to transport the ark and Uzza, who was not a Levite, reached out and touched the ark with this hand when it almost fell off of the cart. This resulted in Uzza’s death (I Chronicles 13:7-10). The incident taught David a healthy respect for the silence of the Scriptures. Later, when David transported the ark to Jerusalem he said, “**None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God**” (I Chronicles 15:2).

The New Testament writers also had a healthy respect for the silence of the Scriptures. The author of the Hebrews epistle had informed his readers that Jesus was a faithful and true High Priest (Hebrews 2:14). The subject of the priesthood of Christ is one that he would revisit later. It was necessary that the Law of Moses be changed if Jesus was going to be our High Priest (Hebrews 7:12). The inspired writer made an

argument that this change in the law was necessary because Jesus was not from the tribe of Levi, but from the tribe of Judah **“of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood”** (Hebrews 7:14). Even the Son of God Himself could not serve in the priesthood of Aaron if His serving would violate the silence of the Scriptures. Since God only authorized the priests to come from the tribe of Levi, the law had to be removed so that Jesus could serve as our High Priest. Surely we can all understand that God means what he says and says what He means. He cannot act presumptuously and do whatever we want to do in religion (Colossians 3:17).

Atchley then went through a long attempt to be humorous at the expense of issues that have divided us. He asserted that use of mechanical instruments of music, praise teams, support of orphans homes, take communion from one container, employment of located preachers, and some group he says believes that it is unscriptural to build a church building. All of these issues are not on the same level. On mechanical instruments of music in worship to God, what I have written above applies. Concerning the “praise team issue” if he means simply having multiple song leaders, we are still simply singing. The authority for such comes from Ephesians 5:19. If the praise team serves as a defacto quartet, the same verse condemns it because we all are to sing to one another. There are no mere spectators sitting and waiting to be entertained when God is the object of worship (John 4:24). If women are leading men in the singing in these praise teams then that is a violation of I Timothy 2:11-14. As to the next issues, they are answered in the latest Contending for the Faith lecture-ship book, *Antism from God or Man.* My disagreement with those brethren on the other side of those issues from me is not, as Atchley’s approach to them is-- we may support orphans homes, use multiple communion containers, employ a preacher who works with one congregation, and build a church building because the Bible does not tell us “thou

shalt not” on these issues. Instead, I would argue that we have Scriptural generic authority for doing them.

THERE ARE TWO GROUPS WITH TWO DISTINCTIVE WAYS OF VIEWING THE BIBLE

Atchley’s sermon demonstrates, that just as in time past, there are at least two distinct groups in what is called churches of Christ that have different ways of looking at the Bible. At the end of the sermon he received a standing ovation, indicating that what has been characterized as the “largest church of Christ” in the world is in agreement with his position on these matters. The last time a large group rejected the Biblical teaching concerning the silence of the scripture, it led to division. I was amazed at how fitting the title for his sermon, “Learning Division” was. If they are employed, the principles advocated in this sermon will certainly cause **“division and offenses contrary to the doctrine”** (Romans 16:17). Unless men like Atchley begin again not to go beyond what is written (I Corinthians 4:6), the result will be the same as it was for the church about 100 years ago this time. At least this time, there is no civil war for future history revisionists to place the blame for such a division on.

ENDNOTES

¹ David Edwin Harrell Jr., “Rethinking the History of Churches of Christ: Responses to Richard Hughes,” *Restoration Quarterly*, 1996, Vol. 38, No1.

² David Lipscomb, Editorial, *Gospel Advocate* 1893, page 453.

³ Moses Lard, “Can We Divide,” *Lard’s Quarterly*, April 1866, 335-336.

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A NOTE FROM DUB MCCLISH

The March 2006 issue of Contending for the Faith carried my article titled, “Reflections on the ‘Restoration Summit’.” I wrote the article in October 1984, and as indicated at the end of the article, it was published in Contending for the Faith in the February 1985 issue. I have been asked if the following statement in the article (p. 10) represents my current convictions: “I have no hesitancy to call those who have obeyed the gospel plan of salvation in the Christian Church my brethren...” That general statement I wrote over twenty-one years ago by no means represents my present convictions. In fact, the statement was far too broad to represent my convictions even then, without some qualifications. I had not read that 21-year-old article in many years. With my knowledge and permission, brother David Brown reproduced the article from his “archives” in the March issue, but unfortunately, I failed to review it before publication. Had I done so, I would have either omitted or severely qualified that statement. The Independent Christian Church, to which I had reference in that article, has increased in its apostasy since that time, and I have learned more about the Independent Christian Church since I made that statement, as well. I regret that the statement has been reprinted, which may have led some to believe that I accept those in the contemporary Independent Christian Church as “erring brethren” without exception or qualification. While a century ago, in the immediate context of the brotherhood-wide division, erring brethren appropriately described those in the Christian Church, that has long since ceased to be the case, whether one has in mind the Disciples of Christ denomination or the Independent Christian Church denomination.

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Holly Pond-Church of Christ, Hwy 278 W., P.O. Box 131, Holly Pond, AL 35083, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., (256) 796-6802, (205) 429-2026.

Somerville-Union Church of Christ, located on Hwy 36, one mile east of Hwy 67, Somerville, Alabama, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Tom Larkin, evangelist, (256) 778-8955, (256) 778-8961.

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-Florida-

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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-Louisiana-

Chalmette-Church of Christ, 200 Delaronde St., Chalmette, LA 70044. Mark Lance, evangelist, (504) 279-9438.

-Massachusetts-

Chicopee-Armory Drive Church of Christ, 26 Armory Drive; Chicopee, MA 01020, in-home, (413) 592-4834, Ken Dion, evangelist.

-North Carolina-

Rocky Mount-Scheffield Drive Church of Christ, 3309 Scheffield Dr., Rocky Mount, NC 27802 (252) 937-7997.

-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-

Lenoir City-Lenoir City Church of Christ, 1280 Simpson Road West, P.O. Box 292 Lenoir City, TN 37771 . Sun. 9:30, 10:30AM, 6:00PM, Wed. 7:00PM., Kent Bailey, Evangelist Tel: 865-986-3223 or 865-986-5698).

Murfreesboro-Church of Christ, 837 Esther Lane, Murfreesboro, TN, 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.murfreesborochurchofchrist.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 12, Denton, TX 76208. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 6:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: 940.323.9797; tgj@charter.net.

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.

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New Braunfels-1130 Hwy. 306, 1.5 miles west of I-35. Sun: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7 p.m. Lynn Parker, evangelist. (830) 625-9367. www.nbchurchofchrist.com.

Richwood-1600 Brazosport, Richwood, TX. Sun. 9:30; 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (979) 265-4256.

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