

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

The 2005 Annual Schertz Lectures

Lester Kamp

While I viewed and listened to most of the live or archived lectures from the 2005 Annual Schertz Lectures, I will not consider all the lectures in this article. However, I will reference several of the lectures to show the direction and content of the entire lectureship. Historically, this lectureship has been of great value to the brotherhood. This was the Third Annual Schertz Lectures (ASL), but they were preceded by twenty one years of lectures known as the Annual Denton Lectures under the very capable direction of Dub McClish. But this year I have been greatly dismayed and disappointed at what I have seen and heard via the broadcast of these lectures by the Online Academy of Biblical Studies. It saddens me greatly to see the changes that have taken place in this lectureship and in many of the men who have spoken on it over the years, but now these same men have capitulated the Truth and principles of character through compromise and open fellowship with error. I have previously highly respected most of these men and believed them to be men of Biblical strength and conviction. Formerly I thought these men would stand for the Truth whatever the circumstances; but, alas, they have chosen now to uphold, openly endorse, and fellowship men who teach error to the dividing of the church. For example, one of the preachers of the Schertz congregation, Stan Crowley, teaches error on divorce and remarriage. He has/had an agreement with the elders of the Schertz church not to teach this doctrine while working with the congregation there. Previous to his work as a preacher for the Schertz congregation and while a student at the Southwest School of Bible Studies (SWSBS), Crowley pressed his errors on MDR at the Buda/Kyle Church of Christ, where he was a member at the time. He was warned to stop pressing his false doctrine on MDR or be removed from SWSBS without graduation. More recently he has taught his error during the 17th Annual South Texas Lectureship (2004) at Beeville, Texas. (See Lynn Parker's chapter in the *2005 Spring Contending for the Faith Lectureship* for a full expose' of this false doctrine. This information has been available too long for anyone to successfully

claim that he is unaware of this doctrine and its promoter.). Ken Ratcliff, who serves the Schertz congregation as one of its preachers and one of its elders, has acknowledged before witnesses that Stan Crowley, the Schertz preacher, is a false teacher. He once believed this so strongly that before witnesses he stated that one of two things would happen **before the 2005 Schertz Lectures**. He said that either Stan Crowley would be dismissed or he (Ken Ratcliff) would no longer be an elder of that congregation. As you will notice later in this article, neither of these "requirements" has occurred.

For the second lecture of this year's series, Gary Rouse introduced Ken Ratcliff as one who "serves as one of the evangelists" and also "serves as an elder" for the Schertz congregation. It should be noted that Stan Crowley not only continues to be the primary preacher for the Schertz congregation, but he was also one of the speakers on the 2005 lectureship. *Ken Ratcliff is obviously a dishonest man.*

Curtis Cates, the long-time director of the Memphis School of Preaching (MSOP), stated at the beginning of his message on the "Sacrilege of Nadab and Abihu" that he wanted to express his appreciation for being "on this great program." He refers to the "program" of the 2005 Schertz Lectures in which he was immediately preceded by a dishonest man who serves with him on *The Gospel Journal* (TGJ) Board and the same "program" which has as one of its speakers a known false teacher! I would hardly call such a program great. But, realize that brother Cates has also endorsed the false teachings of Dave Miller (notorious for re-evaluation/reaffirmation of elders and MDR errors) by placing his name on the "Statement of Support" list of those who "have complete confidence" in Apolgetics Press where Miller now serves as Director. However, we should not be surprised at his description of the ASL as a "great program."

Cates further said that we "love and appreciate the preacher of this congregation, the elders of this congregation...and wish you Godspeed as you do the work of the Lord." His words here are most appalling! Surely the director of MSOP is familiar

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

David P. Brown, Editor and Publisher
jbrow@charter.net

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Editorial...

A MATTER OF CONFIDENTIALITY

In order to stop people from having an opportunity to respond to various accusations and fabricated tales, certain brethren are labeling things **confidential**. Again, said persons are doing the same in an attempt to prevent their own errors from being known, examined, refuted, and corrected. Moreover, their unscrupulous efforts serve to blind certain naive, gullible, and ignorant brethren who are moved more by their emotions and self-interest than the cold hard facts of reality examined in the light of the absolute, objective, infallible, and complete standard of Biblical Truth bearing on the issues. These uninformed and “better felt than told” brethren are they who diligently seek for any excuse to continue to believe in the integrity of certain brethren and brotherhood projects to which they are wed; no matter that adequate evidence and credible witnesses abound proving that such integrity has disappeared from their favorite preacher(s) or pet project(s). Regarding certain preachers and projects, they are willing to accept just about anything or anyone who will respond to their plaintive whine of, “*Tell me it ain’t so.*” Then through soft, warm, and fuzzy stories that serve to beguile subjective and unstable hearts, there is always some charlatan who declares: “*Don’t cry.*” “*It’ll be alright.*” “*You know it really ain’t so.*” “*Don’t let these ole bad, mean-spirited, and negative preachers get you down.*” “*You just listen to me and I’ll keep the boogie bears away.*” By good words and fair speeches they set out their more *balanced* programs to lull the brethren to sleep—and that is not very difficult to do when it is the case that some brethren wander around about half awake in the first place. In reality such persons want to hear anything but the bare facts in a case; for such facts trouble their comfort zones. When it comes to well-manufactured, customized, and pragmatic fabrications, certain brethren very well know their tailored false reports cannot stand the light of proper examination and scrutiny by those who know better. Such persons do not intend to be backed into a corner or gored on either horn of a dilemma where their erroneous and inconsistent reports can be properly exposed so that the facts and truth pertaining to the same may be made clearly known.

When anyone reports as factual and true something about me, others, situations, and/or various subjects that are, in reality, **NOT** factual or true, **and they do so under the guise of confidentiality**, then I want to rise up and expose them for the dishonest sinners they are. For a fact, the

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Bible condemns anyone who does not have a disposition of heart that urges him/her to oppose, expose, and correct such crooked and wicked efforts of bad men and women who appear as angels of light. As the Lord taught, **“Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him”** (Luke 17:3). Moreover, in time sins known only to two brethren are made public if the one guilty of sin rejects all Scriptural overtures to bring him/her to repentance (Matthew 18:17). All other things being Scripturally equal, *is telling a sin(s) of a brother or sister to the whole church, which sin(s) began when one brother sinned against another, the breaking of a Biblically authorized confidentiality?*

Many years ago I had the preceding false confidentiality business pulled on me in a court of law by a lawyer while I was testifying in a divorce case. The man in the case had confessed to me and a deacon of the church that he was guilty of adultery. The adulterous husband ended up suing his wife for a divorce on the grounds of incompatibility. The innocent wife responded with a counter suit against the adulterous husband for divorce on the grounds of adultery.

Previously, the elders and several other members worked for weeks to meet with the guilty man, but he dodged us on every occasion. Finally his daughter told us where we could meet him. It was on his work place’s parking lot. One of the deacons and I finally caught up with the adulterous brother (who also was a deacon) on said parking lot at the end of the adulterous brother’s workday. In the presence of the deacon who had accompanied me, I asked the adulterous man the following question, *“As a married man have you had sexual intercourse with any woman other than your wife?”* He unequivocally answered *“Yes”* to my question. The deacon and I wrote the conversation down and it was by the innocent sister’s lawyer introduced as evidence in the divorce court proceedings. While I was on the witness stand, in his attempt to impeach my testimony, the confessed adulterous man’s lawyer endeavored to make it appear that I had been in a counseling session with the adulterous man when he made his confession of adultery to me. Of course, said lawyer completely ignored the fact that another man was with me at the time the adulterous man confessed his sin in response to my previously noted question and, thus, he witnessed all that was said and done in said meeting. Thus, in the process of carrying out the teaching of the New Testament regarding the corrective discipline for an erring brother who refused to repent of his sins, the whole church necessarily was formally informed about the adulterous man’s sins. However, the adulterous man’s lawyer attempted with all his might to convince the court that I had acted unethically in

revealing this adulterous man’s sin to the church. This was the case, so his lawyer alleged, because I had violated the adulterous man’s **confidence**. Of course none of this argumentation had a thing to do with the **fact** that the lawyer’s client had confessed his adultery in no uncertain terms and had been living with his adulteress even to that present hour.

Any one who knows anything about the fundamentals of logic realizes what the adulterous man’s lawyer had attempted to employ on me the *Argumentum ad Hominem* (an argument directed to the man rather than to the issue at hand) in his attempted efforts to discredit me and thereby my testimony. *The whole reason for using the ad hominem is to attempt to discredit a proposition by discrediting the speaker (in said divorce case the lawyer used it in his attempt to discredit me).* However, such an argument fails to provide relevant evidence against the proposition it seeks to disprove (in this case my testimony). Thus, it

(EDITORIAL CONTINUED ON PAGE 18)

with II John 9-11 and what this passage says about bidding Godspeed to teachers of error! I hardly think that what is being done in or by a congregation that harbors a false teacher as its full time preacher is doing the Lord's work. Cates' choice of words here could hardly have been accidental. What do his words of endorsement tell of MSOP and the elders at Forest Hill that oversee this once good work? Will we hear any rebuttal from them regarding these matters? Probably not.

Cates observed, "For a human being created in the image of God and responsible to Jehovah God and responsible for obeying Him and to come under God's criticism and condemnation is a very serious matter." "The Bible says God is angry with the wicked every day." He is absolutely right in his previous comments! Bro. Cates then spent some time talking about how "alarming" it would be to get up in the morning (eat meals, go to sleep, etc.) and realize that God is angry with you. Brother Cates, it is also alarming to do all these things while God is angry with you and **you do not realize it or by design ignore it!** Does he not realize that he is under "God's criticism and condemnation" when he chooses to ignore and violate II John 9-11? Cates then concluded, "We don't need to have an angry God because we violate His Will and we do those things that are not authorized before God." Indeed! Obedience to God is the key.

Cates accurately defined "strange" to mean "that which is unauthorized." But, he, too, is manifesting "strange" behavior in having fellowship with teachers of error and bidding them Godspeed. This is totally unauthorized behavior and does not have God's approval. After quoting "the Hebrews writer", Hebrews 10:31, and II Cor. 5:11, he stated, "That's the reason why we **at great sacrifice** try to plead with people to obey the gospel of Christ and persist in His Will because it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Bro. Cates obviously is not willing to make "a great sacrifice" because he was willing to rid TGJ of two good men who stand for the Truth when threats of the loss of substantial funds needed for MSOP are made by unknown individuals [*To our knowledge no one has ever charged brother Cates with seeking funds for his own personal use, or the abuse of the same.*—EDITOR] Brother Cates would rather uphold error and lose his own soul than make the necessary sacrifices. "**By their fruits ye shall know them**" (Matthew 7:20). Cates knows this because he also said, "Nothing is more valuable than the human soul." He further admitted, "If I lose my soul, then I have lost it all." He said, "We need to see the severity and the **fatality** of the transgression of God's law."

Joseph Meador, director of the SWSBS for the last twelve years, including the time when Stan Crowley was a student in the school, stated: "I appreciate this congregation so very much for all that you mean to the cause of Christ as far as the restoration of primitive, apostolic Christianity is concerned." What does a congregation with such a preacher mean for the cause of Christ? Has brother Meador changed his mind on the doctrine that almost got Crowley removed from the SWSBS under Meador's own directorship? Perhaps Meador

is afraid of becoming part of what he has described as "a few who are in a small, but no less toxic, loyalty circle...a small negative faction, who if they gain control, will only rupture fellowship in the church even more than they already have."

John Moore, new co-editor of *The "NEW" Gospel Journal* declared to the 2005 ASL audience, "Let me say how much I appreciate this congregation and brother Stan Crowley and his wife and the elders here..." Brother Moore is on the faculty at SWSBS and surely knows of Crowley's false doctrines. [*In fact, he is on record saying that he disagrees with Crowley's false doctrine on divorce and remarriage. Evidently, brother Moore thinks you can appreciate a false teacher and fellowship him as well.*—Editor]

John Moore also revealed something of the new direction of *The "NEW" Gospel Journal*, "We are going to do the very best that we can to bring to you issues that are encouraging, that edify, that instruct, that build up people, that are good for the church, every member of the church..." One of the original editorial aims of *TGJ* was to "oppose and expose both doctrinal error from all quarters." This original aim of the journal is noticeably absent from Moore's description.

When the preacher for the Forest Hill-Irene Road congregation, Memphis, Tennessee (the home of MSOP), Barry Grider, closed the lectures, he began by referring to his gratefulness for being able to serve with John Moore as one of the co-editors of *The "NEW" Gospel Journal*. In his remarks he again referred to the purposes of *T"NGJ* under their editorship. He stated that both of them are "committed to doing our best to provide for our brotherhood a paper that is Biblically sound, one that is well-balanced, one that will build up the home and build up the church." Again, opposing and exposing doctrinal error was not mentioned, however, he called this "well-balanced." I wonder how long it will be before this editorial change becomes documented by the actual change in the original editorial aims originally stated by the *TGJ* Board when the paper began. It is growing increasingly obvious that many of my brethren are no longer interested in exposing error and doing only what the New Testament authorizes.

Tim Ayers, a member of the faculty of SWSBS, stated, "We appreciate this congregation for **your stand for the Truth and the reputation** you have in the brotherhood; it is very good. We appreciate that. We appreciate the congregation, **brother Crowley**, the elders and all that are here." Apparently, Ayers thinks standing for the Truth and having a very good reputation include having a false teacher for their preacher. How absurd! Is this what is being taught now at SWSBS? Earlier the school wanted this false teacher (Crowley) to stop his teaching of error or be expelled from the school. What has changed, brethren?

Significantly, Ayers referred to the fact that the speakers had been urged to stay on the subject. (I also heard this stated on the internet by several other speakers during live broadcasts.) I wonder what those in charge of the lectures feared would be said by the speakers not "on the subject" assigned.

Don Walker, preacher for the Shenandoah church, San Antonio, Texas joined the familiar chorus by saying, "We are grateful for this congregation, for her elders, **for her**

preacher...” Richard D. Melson also remarked, “I am thankful for the eldership, for this congregation... We pray God’s blessing for not only what we do today, but that these tools will go forward and be useful in the Master’s kingdom.” Praying for God’s blessing on a congregation in its present condition is certainly bidding Godspeed to error. Michael Light remarked, “the Lord’s kingdom will be better off” because of the lectureship. He considers a time of fellowship with error as possibly making the kingdom better off. Fellowship with error will not ever make the kingdom of our Lord better! “We don’t take polls to determine right and wrong.” He is certainly right in this, but how many presently are determining their “position by” the popularity of the view? How many are

more interested in speaking on more lectureships and Gospel Meetings than standing upon the unchanging Word of God?

The 2005 Schertz Lectures were certainly different from previous years. Instead of clearly standing for the Truth and upon the Truth, this lectureship was full of compromise and fellowship with error. What a sad day for the brotherhood!

—PO Box 1484
Statesville, NC 28687

EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION TO THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE

*I received the article I am herein introducing by email in the Spring of 2005 from brother Kenneth Ratcliff, elder and a preacher for the Schertz Church of Christ, Schertz, Texas. Ratcliff and I had discussed Stan Crowley’s (also Schertz’s preacher) false views on MDR on several occasions. At no time was Ratcliff in agreement with Crowley’s novel views on MDR. He considered Crowley’s doctrine gross error and he indicated the same in the presence of several other brethren on different occasions at different places in the country. Because of our discussions, Ratcliff emailed his article to me that I might study it and give him my thoughts about it. However, before I was able to give him my studied views of it, he chose the course of least resistance in the present distress over Dave Miller, AP, Stan Crowley, GBN, et al. And, in the months since last July, he along with several others, have exemplified James statement that “**A double minded man is unstable in all his ways**” (James 1:8).*

*Ratcliff did not intend for his article to be printed. But neither did I think anyone could make as many statements of what he would and would not do regarding Stan Crowley by a certain time, participate in the attempted character assassination of faithful brethren such as Dub McClish and David B. Watson, and continue to fellowship other false teachers such as Dave Miller and his fellow travelers, as well as those who support them, but Ratcliff has done so and continues down the same broad path to this day. Yes, he and his fellow turncoats do all the preceding things while at the time opposing those who teach the Truth on these matters. And, they do all of these sinful things with seemingly no fear of death and The Judgment. However, here is Ratcliff’s article on MDR. Let me hasten to say that the article sets forth Ratcliff’s position on MDR as of Spring of 2005. Whether he still holds these views, I do not know. If he does not now believe all of the article or any part of it, he can certainly say so. **Be those things as they may, the article certainly disagrees with the fatal false doctrine of Stan Crowley.***

—EDITOR

WHAT IF A MAN AND WOMAN DEALT DIRECTLY WITH GOD IN THE MATTER OF MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE?

Kenneth E. Ratcliff

Somehow it seems that the subject of marriage and divorce has been made extremely complicated. Surely, God did not make something that important so difficult that it should be a problem. The following poses a series of situations involving marriage and divorce in which the parties must deal directly with God. It is recognized that everyone will not agree with some of the statements that are made. For example, some might contend that God is not the only one who can end a marriage by a divorce. They (it is believed) will say that God will recognize and accept a divorce granted by man even though there is no scriptural basis for the divorce. In any event, consider the following:

1. A man and woman come before God and tell Him that they want to be married. God asks each of them if that is their desire and they both say “yes.” God reminds them that once He joins them together the marriage will not be broken

except in two situations: 1. One of them dies, or 2. One of them is unfaithful and the innocent spouse desires to end the marriage. God further reminds them that only He can join them together as husband and wife and only He can separate that relationship.

The man and woman say that they understand and God tells them that He has united them in marriage as husband and wife.

2. Time passes and they again come before God and tell Him that they wish to be separated for awhile. God tells them that is acceptable; however, they have a responsibility to come together again. God reminds them that during the separation they are still married and they should not remain separated too long lest one of them be tempted to sin.

3. More time passes and the man and woman return to God and tell Him that they no longer desire to be married.

God knows that neither of them has been unfaithful to the other. He reminds them of the instructions that He had given them at the time they were united in marriage. He refuses to give them a divorce.

4. The man decides that he will take matters into his own hands. He prepares a statement declaring the marriage ended and all of the men in his community sign the document. The man then delivers it to his wife and informs her that their marriage is thereby ended. God brings the man and woman before Him and informs them that the marriage is not ended. The man can obtain the approval of every human on earth but it will not end the relationship that God created.

5. The man decides that the approval of the men of his community is sufficient for him and all of the people agree that the man and woman are now divorced. The man either remarries or engages in adultery/fornication. The woman goes to God. She tells God that she understood that she was still married in spite of the actions of the man. However, she recalls that God said that if a spouse was unfaithful the other could ask God to end the marriage. She therefore asks that God free her from the marriage. God therefore terminates the marriage and the woman is free to remarry. The man is informed by God that because of his conduct he is not free to remarry and must repent and terminate any sinful conduct.

6. The husband and wife decide they cannot live together and they know God will not give them a divorce. They separate and each hopes that the other will commit adultery so that they will have the basis for a divorce. Ultimately one of them is unfaithful. The other goes to God and seeks a divorce. God grants the divorce, as He had not given any limiting conditions. Each individual is responsible for their personal conduct. No one forced the one to commit adultery although the temptation was greater since they were separated. The innocent spouse is free to remarry but God demands that they repent of the sin of not only desiring the other to sin but helping to create the situation, which would lead them to be tempted to sin. Further, the innocent spouse had neither shown love nor carried out their responsibilities as a spouse.

7. A man who is free to marry seeks to marry a woman that God has not separated in divorce. They go to God to be married, but He refuses to join them in marriage because the woman is not free to marry. They go to the leaders of the community and tell them that they want to be married. The community leaders perform a ceremony and tell them that they are joined in marriage. God confronts the man and woman and informs them that it does not matter what others may have decided. They are not married, but since they are having a sexual relationship they are living in sin. They must both repent (with all that repentance involves). The man is still free to marry and the woman is not eligible for remarriage.

8. Some additional thoughts:

a. How can you call an event a marriage if it is also claimed that God does not recognize it as a marriage. It can be much the same as events that happen in the world. A man might marry several women without the benefit of divorcing any of them. He is a bigamist and will be punished by the law. He has had several marriages but only the first will be recognized. He was not free to marry the others. We still say they he married the other women. The same might apply in

the cases of divorce. A U.S. citizen might determine that he could not obtain a divorce in the United States. He therefore goes to Mexico and obtains a divorce. Upon returning to the U.S. he seeks to enforce the divorce decree from Mexico but learns that it is void and cannot be enforced in the U.S. He is still married. He had a divorce but it has no significance where it really counts.

b. How can there be two putting away/divorces? Actually, it is very easy. One may be done by man by going through whatever process that man has devised. If it is in harmony with God then there will only be one putting away. If it is not in harmony with God, then the divorce is not worth the paper it is written on. If one of them later commits adultery, the innocent spouse can put away the one who is guilty. Thus, there is a second putting away.

c. Is there such a thing as a “waiting game?” It is not found in the Bible. There is a warning for spouses not to remain separate lest they be tempted to sin. There is naturally the temptation to sin when a spouse is put away when there is no unfaithfulness. Each person has a responsibility to refrain from sin regardless of what others may do. The fact that the conduct of a spouse may make one more susceptible to temptation does not remove the personal responsibility to refrain from sin. There is really no basic difference than when a couple remain together but one or both, intentionally or otherwise, by their conduct make it impossible to live with them. This could easily lead one to be tempted to sin but there would still be no justification and each individual has a responsibility to refrain from sin. However, by their conduct, one or both, are committing sin by not conducting themselves as God intended. Nevertheless, if one is unfaithful they have provided the grounds for a scriptural divorce. The Lord did not say that unfaithfulness was the basis for a divorce only when the party seeking the divorce was without fault. Two or more distinct sins are involved in such situations and the marriage relationship is of special significance.

Someone might object by saying that this could permit someone to marry and be such a terrible person that their spouse commits adultery. They may divorce the guilty spouse and remarry and repeat the process. That is a possibility. However, it does not remove the responsibility of each individual from the personal obligation to refrain from sin regardless of what others may say or do. It also indicates that just as we need to exercise care in selecting friends, we need to be far more careful in selecting a marriage partner.

Another factor, that might be considered in conjunction with this are the situations which do occur. Those who are married are at times separated due to a number of factors which at times are beyond their control. One might be drafted and be absent for several years. One, whether innocent or guilty, may be convicted of a crime and put in prison for the rest of his/her life (which could be for many years). Such situations do not provide the other party the basis for a divorce. At the same time the separation may easily make one more susceptible to temptation. The intent of either or both is not a factor.

—350 Kove Ln
Cibolo, TX 78108

F. E. (EDDIE) WHITTEN
1102 N. PASEO DE GOLF
GREEN VALLEY, AZ 85614
(520)393-9303 few38@cox.net

Mr. Dub McClish
908 Imperial Dr.
Denton, TX 76209

Dear Dub:

It has been some time since I have communicated with you. The last I heard was that Lavonne's cancer was in remission for which I am extremely glad. I know the prospects forebode that it will return, but I sincerely hope that the remission will be long-lasting. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

I received a disconcerting e-mail yesterday from Paul Ditoro. He related that his daughter, Sandy Tipton, who worships at Northeast, was disturbed over information which indicated that you and David [Brown] had some "strange ideas about MDR." I responded to Paul that I had known for several years that David took the position that a civil divorce, not for the cause of fornication, did not preclude subsequent remarriage if adultery was committed later. I have discussed this issue with David on a couple of occasions, one being at my house when David was attending some classes in Dallas, and stayed with me.

I also knew that Lynn Parker, Michael Hatcher and Terry Hightower also held this view, but I was really taken aback when I found that you do, too! Now, David and Lynn are really pushing this view and are out in the open about it. The April [2005] issue of CFTF is very plain. David classifies anyone who disagrees with his view as "workers for the Devil." I am so very sorry that on that basis, I had no choice but to write to David and cancel my subscription to CFTF on the basis of protest of his, in my judgment, rash statement. In making such a statement, he categorically condemns most of the sound preachers I know that have always held that fornication had to be the cause of yes, the civil divorce as per Matthew 5:32.

The basis that a civil law overrides God's law in the case of civil divorce is completely unfounded. God joins a couple in marriage per Matthew 19:6, but only in view of the civil ceremony. Otherwise, fornication would constitute marriage. Men disobey God's law, and in doing so subject themselves to the consequences of their action. "Put away," or "putting away" refers to civil divorce, does it not? Jesus says then, "Whosoever divorces his wife in a civil action, except for the *cause* of fornication, and marries another commits adultery." I never heard of this new wrinkle until just four or five years ago!

Dub, I implore you to study about this some more if, indeed, you have taken their view. I wrote David that his pushing this position is no less devastating and divisive to the church as [*sic*] Mac Deaver's Holy Spirit hobby. I also expressed my dismay that even though I consider him a dear friend, I could have no fellowship with that kind of error since it is [*sic*] a matter of salvation involved.

I know the friendship you have enjoyed for so many years with all those I have named in this letter. Those same folk have been my friends for anywhere from 20 to 40 years, but

I have had to choose between my friends and what the Bible says. If I lose such close friends, that is what I will have to do, but I cannot go against what the Bible teaches.

As a source of my information, and with his permission, I contacted Tommy Hicks yesterday to confirm the report that you were taking this erroneous position. I did not want to trouble you in the light of Lavonne's problems and the taxation of your time if this rumor was not true. He does not take that position, and I know very few who do. I know that Jim Boyd does and probably several others, but, for the most part, I am persuaded that most of the sound brethren that you and I have known so long do not.

I personally believe that you will do yourself irreparable harm to pursue this invention. You have put in too much time, too much effort and too much of your reputation as a sound Bible student and faithful Gospel preacher to have your life's work destroyed by the stroke of a pen such as has happened to Roy Dearer [*sic*], James D. Bales and others who have gone astray. Please don't let this happen to you, my dear friend.

The future of the Gospel Journal hinges to a very great degree upon the path you take.

Yours, very concerned
Eddie

[**Note:** This letter was postmarked May 4, 2005.]

June 4, 2005

Mr. Eddie Whitten
1102 N. Paseo De Golf
Green Valley, AZ 85614

Dear Eddie:

Thank you for your kind thoughts about Lavonne in your letter of May 4. She and I both appreciate them. I also appreciate your brotherly and obviously sincere concern over what you perceive to be my erroneous position on MDR. Knowing her only on a very casual basis, I do not know what Paul's daughter had heard relative to my holding "some strange ideas about MDR" (or from whom she may have heard them) or what she might consider "strange ideas" on the subject to be.

I need to respond to many things in your letter. I hope that I can do so frankly and openly, yet as a gentleman, and not in such a way as to acerbate this already highly-charged controversy among faithful brethren. This is my sincere intent. Let me first say that I have not "taken the view" of David, Lynn, Michael, Terry, or anyone else, but I simply believe what I believe because I am convinced that it is the teaching of Scripture. I have no hesitancy to say that my view of the matters about which you wrote is **in agreement** with those named (and with quite a few other brethren who have distinguished themselves as being anything but liberals or heretics)—insofar as I am familiar with their convictions. However, you seem to be under the impression that my friendship with them may have influenced me or that my convictions resulted from some

sort of political expediency in relation to them. Did I base my “convictions” on long-time friendships and relationships with brethren, I would still be at Pearl Street and never would have had to go through the meat grinder those men put me through. Your innuendo in this regard hardly deserves a response, especially from a trusted friend of many years. Surely, you are aware that I have many, many dear and trusted friends (including you) who **do not** agree with me on this facet of the MDR issue. Now I am confused: First, you imply that I may have formulated my position out of political expediency, then you turn around and encourage me to **change** my views on the basis of political expediency—by issuing an ominous warning (in the close of your letter) that my position may jeopardize the future of *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL*. Just for the record, I do not arrive at my convictions from such motivations. Eddie, it is beneath you even to think such a thing of me. I thought you had more respect for me than to imply such.

I do not know precisely how long ago I came to the conclusions you find so “disconcerting,” but it was well over 20 years, which is likely longer ago than some of those you named have held them. Believe it or not, it is still possible (even for a light-weight such as I) to arrive at conclusions concerning Scripture through my own study. I was saddened that several of your remarks were condescending in tone, though I grant that you might not have intended them so. Your letter immediately reminded me of a letter from Gary Colley when he first learned several years ago that I believe in the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He first expressed great shock and disappointment, then said he would “defend me the best he could” whenever my convictions on the matter were discussed in his presence. I appreciated his generous offer, but I did not really feel that either my position or that I personally needed a defense or apology from him or anyone else. My position on the indwelling is neither liberal nor heretical, as he implied. I am of the same conviction concerning my view of the MDR issue, which has apparently shocked you.

You suggested that I do some more study. I have actually done much study on this subject through the years, but I have also done more study and research since receiving your letter, some of which my remaining comments will reflect. You are obviously very upset with David [Brown], especially. I do not need to defend him, for he is quite capable of defending his own words and actions. However, I must say that, upon reading your letter, I could not recall his using any such terminology as “workers of the devil” in regard to those with whom he differs on MDR (although this term is surely apropos for the liberals who have created endless loopholes so as to overturn Matthew 19:9). Just in case I may have missed it, I reread the April *CFTF*, and I could find no such expression. If I have overlooked it, I will stand corrected. However, if he did **not** use such terminology, then your accusation, rather than his non-existent statement, constitutes a “rash statement,” yea, a false statement. Perhaps you meant that you inferred from his words that he thinks that those who disagree with him are “workers of the devil,” but you put the words in quotes, indicating that they were David’s words.

You accused David and Lynn of “really pushing” this view and of coming “out in the open about it,” as if Lynn’s Spring lecture [i.e., February 2005] and the April *CFTF* were the first words they had uttered on the subject or that they had

been secretive about their convictions. This reaction surprised me in light of the recent history of this controversy. Let me refresh your memory. In about 1990, Jimmy Parker (Lynn’s uncle who several years ago withdrew from Lynn over this very issue, as you perhaps know) was really pressuring Jerry Moffitt to debate this matter that has suddenly become so explosive. When I learned that Jerry was considering doing so, I called him and begged him not to, believing it would be unnecessarily divisive. I also assured him that those of us whom he wants to debate believe in the one exception of fornication as strongly as he does. Jerry thought it over and relented, and as far as I know, had not mentioned the matter publicly again until his remarks at the Southwest Lectures last year (and why he felt compelled to then, I have no idea, especially in light of his comments I will mention below). Others may have cautioned him about a debate on the subject besides me, but he has thanked me more than once through the years for talking him out of any such debate challenges. The issue was not being pushed from either “side” in the interim so far as I know until brethren **with whom you are in agreement** began writing articles on the subject a few years ago, which implied, at least, that any who agree with the position I hold are liberals and unworthy of fellowship.

As far back as 1989, Jim Mettenbrink (see below) wrote an article, supposedly in response to the late Guy N. Woods’ comments on this subject in his *Q & A*, vol. 2, book (pp. 45–46). As far as I know, no one made any public response to the Mettenbrink article for thirteen years—not until 2002 (again, see below). Then Jim Waldron jumped into this issue with all four feet a few years ago, with his straw man “waiting game” accusations and (in my judgment) unnecessarily harsh rhetoric. (For some insight into Jim’s autocratic, domineering personality, you might talk with some of the folks who have had to deal with him on the mission field [e.g., Asghar Ali [Pakistan], Dorsey Traw [Thailand], et al.] He has seemed determined to demonize anyone who held any other view than his (and yours, as demonstrated by his use of your “Waiting Game” article). Only then, as I have been able to piece things together, did David begin to make some response. Surely, you read the articles by Don Tarbet, Guy N. Woods, Robert Taylor, and David (quoting McGarvey and Boles), in the November 2001 *CFTF*—an issue that carried one of your many regular columns (pp. 23–24). You thereby **had to know** (at that point, if not before) David’s convictions, but this knowledge did not deter you from continuing to write your “The Last Word” columns for *CFTF*. Did you voice your concern that he was “really pushing” this matter or that he had come “out in the open about it” then? You and I were in very close and frequent contact during all this time, but I do not recall your expressing any concern to me about these articles or this doctrine that you now are unable to fellowship “since it is a matter of salvation involved.”

You apparently did not read the **September 2002 *CFTF*** very closely, for it contained a lengthy editorial by David, a lengthy article by Lynn, a reprint of the aforementioned article by Jim Mettenbrink, followed by a response to the Mettenbrink article by Terry Hightower—all on MDR. Moreover, you should not have been surprised to hear only very lately of my convictions of this subject, for Terry named me, among

several others besides himself, in his 2002 article, who thus believe. I cannot believe that you did not read that issue of *CFTF*, for Paul Vaughn **featured you in his column** (pp. 19–20). Again, you must not have been overly concerned about David’s convictions, for you continued to write your “The Last Word” column **through December 2002**. But, more recently, you had no problem accepting the dedication of the Spring Lectureship book to you in February 2003, yet you had to know well before that time that David held the position, which you now find so reprehensible. Additionally, you seemed to have no problem accepting the dedication of the Bellview book to you in 2003, yet you had to know by then, also, that Michael held this “erroneous” MDR view. I am curious to know the reason(s) our convictions on this subject so suddenly became a damnable doctrine and a fellowship issue.

Where was the outrage—from you or others who seem now to be so upset—when Jim Waldron began “really pushing” his (and your) view and of coming “out in the open about it” a few years ago? He was so determined to push “his view” that he split the church in Dunlap, TN, which resulted in his having to move to Crossville. If information one of the eyewitnesses has supplied me concerning this sad situation is correct, the “straw that broke the camel’s back” at Dunlap was your “The Waiting Game” article that Jim had printed in his June 2003 *Bulletin Briefs* to mail to a long list of brethren. I was sorely disappointed when I saw your article in his material. (Someone [I cannot recall who] indicated to me soon after your article appeared that you even expressed regret that Jim had published it.) Apparently, some of the brethren at Dunlap were also very disappointed in it and did not agree either with your article, with Jim’s combative tactics and his position on this subject, or with his sending that mailing in the name—and at the expense—of the Dunlap Church. Further, they could foresee the completely unnecessary firestorm it would cause to mail this material all over the brotherhood. Thus that mailing was canceled, and the eventual fallout was a division at Dunlap and Jim’s move to Crossville. Surely, Jim knew that several faithful brethren did not agree with his position a long time before he decided to launch his offensive, but he seemed not to care about the unnecessary disruptions it would cause. An eyewitness at Crossville has also told me that Jim’s first attempt to flood the brotherhood with his material after he moved was blocked by the Crossville elders, but he now seems to have them in his pocket. Moreover, he had never before beat the drums of “disfellowship” over this issue of which I am aware, but he most definitely is now beating them, as you doubtless know. When asked about brother Woods’ position, he has replied that if brother Woods were still alive, he (Jim) would have to withdraw from him. Do you agree with this dictum, Eddie? I do not know about you, but I view that as radicalism gone to seed.

Whether or not Jim’s campaign emboldened some others, I know not. However, it is at least coincidental that there has been somewhat of a rash of public proclamations from his (and your) perspective in the last couple of years. Note the following:

1. March 2002: Stan Crowley launched an attack against Tim Kidwell at Buda-Kyle over this very issue (David refers to this occurrence in his April editorial, but I was informed of it by one who was involved in it as it was happening.) Stan was still a Southwest student at

the time, but was still a member at B-K. He publicly marked Tim as a false teacher for simply agreeing with brother Woods’ statement, and Stan provoked a “church trial” over it (B-K had no elders). Reportedly, he received pressure from some source (rumor has it that his upcoming graduation might have been jeopardized) so he backed off, deciding (conveniently) that perhaps it was not a Heaven or Hell issue after all. However, he succeeded in dividing and causing great grief to brethren there by his behavior, which things he still has not made right with Tim or the other brethren he harmed.

- 2. October 2003:** Monte Evans delivered a lecture at Cedar Bayou that advocated “Jim’s doctrine” (for lack of a better term; I intend no offense).
- 3. January 2004:** Stan Crowley delivered a lecture at Beeville in which, by an extremely circuitous route (abusing both linguistics and Scripture), he arrived at the Jim Waldron conclusion. I have been told by some who agree with Jim that they are not able to stomach Crowley’s argumentation on the matter.
- 4. April 2004:** Jerry Moffitt delivered a lecture on MDR at Southwest, in which he referred to those who disagree with the Waldron (and his and your) position by the pejorative term as those who play “the waiting game.” He also ridiculed the idea that not all marriages and/or divorces authorized by civil courts are such “in God’s eyes” (a phrase that definitely embodies a Scriptural concept [Isa. 55:8–9, et al.]).

We who disagree with the Waldron (and your) position have not been on the offensive on this subject through tracts, newsletters, and lectures (except the **responses** to attacks in *CFTF* as already noted). As far as I know, Lynn’s lecture last February was the first lecture in many years that has addressed this controversy from the perspective you oppose. (The only previous one devoted wholly to the subject of which I am aware was Terry Hightower’s at FSOP Lectures way back in 1996. Besides Terry’s lecture, I know of only the following coming from our side of the issue: Jackie Stearsman wrote a brief article (5 pp.) on this subject and published it in the 1999 FSOP book, but he did not deliver a lecture on it. Robert Taylor stated our view of this matter concisely in the course of answering a question on MDR in a Q & A forum at Beeville Lectures in 2001 [He does not believe that our position is any sort of “invention,” as you have characterized it].) Yet, suddenly, in the span of one year, there were four such incidents, three of them full-fledged lectures, from folks with whom you agree.

Did Jim (and did you) not know that responses were inevitable to such actions? Are we who have been maligned as false teachers and unworthy of fellowship supposed to sit by silently? Surely, you did not expect us to say nothing in response to the accusation that we advocate the erroneous “waiting game,” when we do not, either implicitly or explicitly, and when several of us have repeatedly gone to some lengths to oppose that sinful practice? Must we be quiet while others mislead brethren to believe that God honors every marriage and/or divorce authorized by civil courts, when the Scriptures make it so clear that He does not? Again, Eddie, where was your outrage when those with whom you agree on this issue were increasingly ratcheting up the pressure and the rhetoric? To expect no response, or to cry “foul” when

the response has come, is not very realistic, to say the least.

Perhaps some on both sides of this controversy have used unnecessarily strong terminology in recent discussions. However, it is certainly unfair to lay it all on one person or one “side.” I was not at Spring, but I have listened to a recording of Lynn’s speech. Personally, I cannot hear the meanness in Lynn’s speech that some profess to hear. Had he been reviewing a Lucado or Deaver speech, he would likely have been applauded by all who have criticized him. I have also heard David’s comments after Lynn’s speech. From the reports of some (before I actually heard his words), I was expecting them to be far stronger than I found them to be. Some have accused him of trying to divide the church over this issue. We do not merely have to accuse some on your side of this controversy of division. As already noted, some have **already** divided congregations over this doctrine (i.e., Jim Waldron and Stan Crowley). If brethren generally follow their extremism, there will be many more unnecessary divisions over this issue. Surely, brethren who have thus charged David and Lynn, but have given Jim and Stan a pass, are simply not aware of the history of those who have been zealously exercising this issue over the past 3 or 4 years, or they are exceedingly biased in their judgment.

If I understand you, you do not want to be accused of arguing that civil law prevails concerning MDR, regardless of what Divine law states—namely that God **approvingly** recognizes whatever marriage or divorce rulings the state issues. In other words, if two people are married according to civil law, God not only takes note of that marriage, but He does so **with His approval**—period, and if a court grants a divorce (on whatever grounds), God **honors** that divorce, thus dissolving the marriage. Does God approve of all “marriages” of which human laws approve (Mark 6:17–18)? Does God dissolve all marriages that civil courts dissolve through divorce? I believe these two questions get to the heart of this issue. Certainly, where civil laws exist **that are in harmony with Divine laws** (on MDR or any other subject), we must comply with them (Rom. 13, et al.).

However, to say that “God joins a couple in marriage per Matthew 19:6, but **only** in view of the civil ceremony,” is far too broad a statement. Jesus went all the way back to Adam and Eve to illustrate God’s all-time law on MDR in this very context. According to your sweeping generalization on what constitutes a marriage, God could not have approved their relationship as a marriage, for no “civil authority” then existed to conduct a “civil ceremony.” When God brought Eve to Adam, did He thus encourage them to engage in fornication (remember, you said that “fornication would constitute marriage” if there is no civil ceremony)? Did they have to commit fornication in order to obey God’s charge to “be fruitful and multiply”? Should they from the beginning have been ashamed in their nakedness because they were not married “in view of the civil ceremony”? If you argue that Adam and Eve were an exceptional case, then what about their posterity over the next few generations? (Who knows how many generations went by before there was any civil law governing marriage?)

Suppose one lived in a nation that passed a law **forbidding** all future marriages, contradicting God’s decree that marriage is the only right and honorable circumstance for sexual unions and procreation (1 Cor. 7:2; Heb. 13:4)? Would this mean

that a man and a woman, eligible “in God’s eyes” to marry, could not marry? I say they could, even in the absence of civil law. What do you say? Again, suppose a nation passed a law that **dissolved** all marriages in effect at the time. Would a Scripturally married husband and wife in this circumstance no longer be married “in God’s eyes”? Would they commit fornication the next time they had sexual relations? I say they would still be married and their subsequent sexual unions would not constitute fornication. What do you say? If civil law is the **only** controlling factor in marriage and divorce, one is forced to label their copulation as “fornication.”

Further, were the homosexuals in San Francisco, Boston, and New York state “married” by Bible definition (i.e., “in God’s eyes”—did God honor these couplings as marriages) when the **civil authorities** in those places issued them licenses and performed their “wedding” ceremonies? If God binds Himself to whatever the state decides to do concerning marriage and divorce, then by implication we have no basis upon which to object to such “marriages.” Moreover, if He does so, He has surrendered His infallible will to the fallible, mutable, and territorial laws of men. It seems apparent that you want to have it both ways. On the one hand, you correctly do not want to be in the position of elevating the laws of men above the law of God, because you know that this is grievous error (Dan. 3:1–18; Acts 5:29; et al.). On the other hand, the position you are arguing clearly implies that, in these MDR issues, you **are** making God’s law subject to the unscriptural laws of the state and/or decrees of the courts. Surely you understand that God does not honor every marriage granted by the state (if you say He does, reread the foregoing material and think about it some more). If He does, there could be no such a thing as an “adulterous marriage.”

Since you asked me about divorce, I now turn my attention to that subject. Does God sanction a divorce (i.e., dissolve a marriage) every time a court grants one? Herodias had a civil-law divorce from Phillip when she married Herod Antipas, who had likewise obtained a civil-law divorce from his wife of several years in order to marry Herodias. Obviously, God did not honor Herodias’ divorce from Phillip, otherwise Mark would not have called her “his brother Philip’s wife” (6:17). “But,” someone inquires, “does not this verse also say of Antipas and Herodias, ‘he had married her?’” The verse undeniably acknowledges that a “marriage” in some sense had taken place. They were, in fact, free to marry each other **according to civil law**, for both of them had **legally divorced** their original mates. However, just as obviously, the **legal** marriage of the two **by civil law** was an **illegal** marriage before God, as the context immediately reveals: “**For John said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother’s wife**” (v. 18, emph. DM). Since by **civil law** their marriage was **lawful**, John could only have meant that by **God’s law** their marriage was **not lawful**. These facts demand the conclusion that Mark used the term *married* in a colloquial sense, that is, accommodatively. While by civil law they were “married,” John knew that by God’s law they were not. As indicated above, historians tell us that both Herodias and Antipas had divorced their respective mates before they married each other. While there may have been more than one reason their “marriage” was **not lawful** before God, no other reason is needed besides the fact that their divorces were

not lawful before God. Herodias was still “**Philip’s wife**” by God’s law (Mark 6:17), and it was not lawful (by God’s law) for Antipas to have his “brother’s wife” (v. 18). Although the text does not say so explicitly, by implication, before God, Antipas was still morally and spiritually bound to his first wife. In other words, it was not lawful for Herodias to have her husband’s (Philip’s) brother (Antipas). God did not approve of the marriage of Antipas and Herodias for the very reason that He did not approve of their respective divorces.

Now, consider these principles in some more contemporary persons. Joe divorces Jane because he finds Mary more attractive (no fornication involved at this juncture). The divorce decree (civil law) says that the marriage no longer exists, freeing Joe **legally** to marry Mary. What does God say? Is Joe free to marry Mary **Scripturally**? In Matthew 19:9, the Lord by implication teaches that Joe and Jane are still married, although the civil-law divorce says that they are not. Would Joe’s marriage to Mary be an adulterous marriage or a Divinely sanctioned one? If Joe and Jane were not still bound to one another by God’s moral and spiritual marriage law (**in spite of** the civil divorce decree), why would Joe’s marriage to Mary constitute adultery—adultery **against** Jane, in fact, whom he divorced without Scriptural cause (Mark 10:11)? Here we have a marriage which **men** say is **allowable**, but which **God** says is **forbidden**—because it constitutes adultery. Robert Taylor summarized it precisely in his 2001 remarks at Beeville: “What might be done in civil government doesn’t always coincide with God’s law. A marriage might end in the courthouse and yet might not end in the sight of the Lord at all.”

The foregoing series of statements leads me to emphasize the one exception Jesus gave that can break the absolute permanency of a God-ordained marriage short of death. We both know that the one exception is fornication. Now, revisit the case of Joe, Jane, and Mary with me.

1. Joe sought and obtained a civil-law divorce from Jane, with no fornication involved on the part of either. At this point, on the basis of Matthew 19:9 and related verses, neither of them can remarry with God’s approval, for to do so would be to commit adultery. This is so in spite of the civil-law divorce, because by Divine law they are still married/bound to one another. Surely, you agree. Their only marriage option in the present circumstance is reconciliation (1 Cor. 7:11). Jane did not want the divorce and sought to prevent it. She sought reconciliation to Joe, but he would have none of it. Another way of looking at it is to say that **legally** the marriage of Joe and Jane has been dissolved, but **Scripturally** (in God’s eyes—there’s that pesky, but Scriptural, phrase again!) it is still intact (because neither of them has died or committed fornication). As far as God is concerned, the divorce decree involving Joe and Jane is no more than a blank piece of paper. They are merely separated **from** each other, but still bound **to** each other, as far as God is concerned.

2. Remember, however, that Joe was already smitten with Mary before the divorce, which attraction was the reason he divorced Jane. Joe now legally marries Mary, and they both thereby become adulterers (regardless of **her** eligibility to be married) as they engage in sexual unions (Mat. 19:9). Would you agree that this “marriage,” while **legal**, is merely a “marriage on

paper” (as was the divorce), but not a marriage at all according to God’s law (as with Antipas and Herodias)? Joe and Mary are actually engaging in fornication, although their relationship is authorized by civil law.

3. Jane did nothing to bring about the divorce. As already noticed, she sought to **prevent** the divorce. She tried to be **reconciled** to Joe and would have forgiven him, but he refused. By marrying Mary, Joe committed fornication, the very ground upon which an innocent spouse may be Scripturally free from the original marriage bond and free to marry again (of course, fornication does not in **itself** dissolve a marriage, but it gives the offended party the **right** to dissolve it and remarry). Jane is an innocent victim, the very one to whom the Lord’s statement gives the right to remarry. However, she cannot now obtain a [civil–EDITOR] divorce, for legally, Joe has already done that; the civil authorities no longer recognize Joe as still being her husband (although God still does). However, as we have already seen, the legal divorce Joe obtained is meaningless before God. Matthew 19:9 gives Jane the moral and Scriptural right to accept—because of Joe’s fornication—the divorce Joe earlier obtained. The marriage is thus **Scripturally** ended, giving Jane the **Scriptural** right to remarry, if she chooses. (Anyone who accuses that which I have described above as “the waiting game”—which I reject as strongly as you do—has more problems than I am capable of solving.)

4. That (1) Jane did not obtain a civil-law divorce from Joe, (2) neither Joe nor Jane had committed fornication at the time the civil-law divorce was granted, (3) the divorce papers did not specify “fornication” as the cause for the divorce, or (4) that Joe’s fornication did not occur until after the meaningless (to God) “paper” divorce was granted **are all irrelevant**, for the Lord honored neither Joe’s and Jane’s divorce nor Joe’s and Mary’s marriage. What the Lord **did** take knowledge of was Joe’s fornication, giving Jane the right to remarry. To say that Jane does not have the right to remarry is to exalt human/civil law above Divine law. To deprive Jane of the right to remarry represents placing more emphasis on the **timing** of the act of fornication than on the **act itself**. Surely, this cannot be correct exegesis.

I reemphasize that the exception does **not** consist of:

1. The acquiring of a civil-law divorce decree when fornication **has not** been committed by either party
2. The acquiring of a civil-law divorce decree that fails to identify fornication on the part of the defendant, even though the defendant had committed fornication
3. The **timing** of the civil-law divorce decree in relation to the commission of fornication.

The exception that allows Scriptural divorce and remarriage for the spouse who has been sinned against is **the act of fornication itself** on the part of one’s mate.

I was amazed that you would not only arbitrarily limit *put away* (ASV) in Matthew 19:9 to “civil” divorce, but then actually insert your interpretation into Jesus’ words in quotation marks, **as if he actually said them**. I would not presume to take such liberties, and I will be surprised if this insertion does not come back to haunt you. I will also be surprised if at least some of those who, while agreeing

with you on this facet of MDR, still would not dare thus to tamper with the Lord's words. It is one thing to express a conviction on the meaning of a passage. It is quite another to rewrite it to fit what one believes. I find it ironic that you call my conviction on this issue a "new wrinkle" and an "invention," but that you have no problem blithely rewriting Jesus' statement in Matthew 19:9. Do you not realize that, by your dictum on divorce, it would be impossible for anyone to Scripturally divorce and remarry in the U.S., except in a mere handful of states that still allow a divorce to be granted, stating "fornication" or "adultery" as the cause?

That you never heard of what you consider to be this damnable error until four or five years ago (at which time you apparently did not consider it to be "damnable error") says more about your failure to keep up than it does about the oldness or newness of our position. I have already mentioned the Woods' quote. The book in which it appears was published in 1986 (almost 20 years ago), but he took it from his column in the *Gospel Advocate* which he had written some years earlier.

I spoke on the Gulf Coast Lectures in Portland a few weeks ago, on which occasion I visited with Jerry Moffitt. He brought the current MDR discussion up in our conversation (I was planning to broach the subject if he did not). He expressed his warm appreciation for various brethren, particularly for David and Lynn, and told me to pass this on to them (which I have done). He stated plainly (without my asking) that he did not see this issue as one that should sever fellowship. He said he knows that those on both sides of this issue believe that only fornication on the part of one's spouse can break the marriage bond, enabling one to remarry Scripturally, but that we just differ on our understanding of the timing aspect of the matter. He told me that he was not interested in debating anyone on it and did not think any good would come of such a debate. Further, he told me that he was telling those who were calling him about this flare up to "cool it." I was pleased to hear him say these things, but they left me wondering why he said the things he did at Southwest in April 2004. Perhaps he did not realize that his remarks had the potential of pouring fuel on some coals that were already smoldering.

Eddie, even as you implored me to study this subject some more, I now implore you to do the same. If I understood you, you have withdrawn fellowship from David. To be consistent, you are going to have to withdraw from me—and from a much longer list of others than you seem to realize. I hope you will move very slowly in any such direction. I am well aware that counting and naming those who hold this or that view in no way determines Truth or error. I would never even consider trying to establish or oppose any doctrine based on personalities. That being said, however, one should surely exercise some sense of caution before writing off men who have long been well known for their Scriptural scholarship, soundness, and balance, and for their courage under fire and their personal maturity. I suspect that you have no idea how many of us there are from whom you will have to withdraw if you get into the "withdrawing business" over this issue. Just so you will know that I am not bluffing, I will randomly name a few (including those you have already mentioned), perhaps some of whom you were unaware: David Brown, Lynn Parker, Michael Hatcher, Terry Hightower, Jim Boyd, David Watson, Don Tarbet, Curtis Cates, Keith Mosher, Bobby Lid-

dell, Garland Elkins, Gary Summers, Kenneth Ratcliff, Cliff Newell, Paul Vaughn, Wayne Jackson, Jack Hendry, Jackie Stearsman, Tim Kidwell, Jason Rollo, Frank Carriger, Larry Powers, Kent Bailey, David Smith, Daniel Denham, Jim Nash, Michael Light, Jeff Sweeten, Denny Wilson, Dorsey Traw, Tom Bright, Ken Cohn, Robert R. Taylor, Wesley Simons, Eddy Craft, Jim Lewis, J.C. Watkins, Freddie Clayton, and Buddy Roth. There are others, but I think you will recognize all or most of these names. I pray that you, Jim Waldron, and others who believe our position is heretical will think twice about withdrawing your fellowship and thus creating another unnecessary cleavage in the precious body of Christ.

We have been friends many years, and I have done my best to prove the sincerity of my friendship. I defended you through all of the years over the 1989 Brown Trail mess. I defended you in all of the turmoil with Buster and FF.... You have likewise been a very good friend to me, not the least of which demonstrations were the generous and consistent financial support you sent for several years. I would **very much** like our friendship to continue. I hope and pray that you share this desire. If it cannot continue, I will not be the one who breaks it.

In Christian love,

Dub McClish

June 7, 2005 (e-mail)

Dear Dub:

I stand severely and thoroughly rebuked! I apologize for stirring you up to the point that you would use so much of your precious time in a response that seems to be tinged to some degree with a bit of anger. I hold no animosity toward you for upholding and defending what you believe to be Truth....

In rereading your letter several times, I have come to the conclusion that, generally, we agree on just about everything except the **timing** involving fornication associated with the divorce. I fear that you have completely misunderstood my understanding, as well as others perhaps, by stating that I evidently accept any marriage as being honored by God. Of course, I do not. I have always believed that a couple must be Scripturally eligible to be married before God honors that marriage. Your reference to Adam and Eve is by no means an argument against civil marriage ceremonies. In those early days, however long that might be, there had to be incest between brother and sister, or else God created other people of whom we have no record. Yet, at some point, incest became unScriptural just as marriage without some form of civil observance ceased to have God's approval. If this were not the case then any form of cohabitation agreement between a man and a woman would constitute marriage. Today, we call any sexual activity engaged in by two parties, in such a context, fornication.

Also, it is apparent that you have misconstrued the civil divorce thing as I understand it. I have never stated, nor believed, that God **honors** a civil divorce for any reason. This

is the crux of the whole situation under discussion! God does not, repeat not, HONOR a divorce without fornication being the reason for the divorce. He does recognize the civil divorce which makes any subsequent sexual involvement adultery. I stand in full agreement with the view that in spite of the civil divorce a couple is still married in God's eyes (totally Scriptural term) and does NOT have God's approval for the divorce. Hence any further sexual contact by either party constitutes adultery. This is the point with which I disagreed with Monte Evan's lecture in which he stated that the couple are no longer married and refuted the terminology "in God's eyes." I was there and told him I disagreed with him on that point. I think his lecture was a little bit of an overreaction on that point.

You accused me of misquoting Jesus and by doing so "presume(d) to take such liberties." You have paraphrased Scriptures before, I am sure, and that is merely what I was doing, not quoting Jesus. If "puts away his wife" (Mat. 5:32; 19:9) does not mean a civil divorce, what does it mean? I don't think that Jesus was saying anything other than that in the light of the Pharisee's question, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" How, and in what manner, can a man "put away" his wife if it is not, indeed, by civil divorce? And, this is where the timing becomes a factor. If the cause (Mat. 5:32; Mat. 19:9 [implied]) of the civil divorce is not fornication then it is an Unscriptural divorce NOT having God's approval thus making subsequent marriage unlawful (as per Herod Antipas and Herodias). If you and all the others you named, believe that the civil divorce does not enter in to the equation, it appears to me that you are reading something into the Scriptures that is not there. I have always believed that God joins an eligible couple in marriage (v. 6), therefore man cannot put asunder that marriage. I can also see that God ends a marriage on the basis of adultery if the "innocent" party so desires whether adultery is specifically stated in the divorce action or not. What I cannot agree with you on is your total disregard for the unScriptural, God disapproved, civil divorce that condemns subsequent sexual activity whether in the context of God disapproved civil marriage, or not. If my paraphrase of Jesus is not correct, as you believe it is not, then you would have to paraphrase Mat. 5:32 something like this: "Whoever **mentally** puts away his wife after a civil divorce on the basis of subsequent fornication makes her an adulteress."

Now, in regard to Jim Waldron. I have never met the man. I have heard of his tactics. I was called by him and asked to write the "waiting game" article. I have no idea why he asked me to do so other than perhaps he has read articles which I had written before, and I am sure that I have written many. He also called me a couple of times afterward and at least hinted that he would like to make a major issue out of this, to which I counseled him to not push it to that degree. I also know that he hounded Gary Grizzell almost to a point of frustration to do the same. Gary called me about it and I told him to caution Jim about making a divisive issue out of it. I knew that he left Dunlap under duress over the MDR issue, but I did not know that my article was the catalyst for that. Neither did I know he split the congregation over it. All he told me was that he had to leave there because the preacher there differed with him to the point of causing trouble. I have not heard from Jim since then. As an aside, someone told me, and I absolutely do not re-

member who, that given the circumstances to which I referred in the article, Robert Taylor said that it sounded like the waiting game to him. I will qualify that report by saying I don't know whether it is true or not. One thing I also need to clarify to you is that I never said that I regretted writing the article.

One other point then I will close. As to continuing to write the "Last Word" for *CFTF* after David, Lynn and I had disagreed on the subject, I did so because I truly did not know the disagreement was so widespread and controversial at that time. I read with concern the issue in which Terry named all of you and refuted Jim Mettenbrink's previous article. That was only a short time before the Spring Lectures the next February. I confronted David in some way (I really do not remember how) about the situation and the ultimate fallout it might precipitate. It was then that David revealed to me that he and the elders had chosen to honor me with the book dedication. I told him that I appreciated that more than he could imagine, but under the circumstances, I would have to leave that decision up to them. He later informed me that they had decided to go ahead with the presentation. The next June it was to my profound surprise that the same thing happened at Bellview. I did not, repeat not, know then that Michael held the same view David did. By the way, David has been cold as ice toward me ever since. I never hear from him anymore. I can understand that if he has reference to my poor preaching, but I feel there is more to his coolness toward me than that. [*Due to lack of space in this issue we will not respond to Whitten's preceding comments about us, but, the Lord willing, we will do so in our next issue of CFTF*—EDITOR]

I have changed my views on many matters over the many years I have been in the church. I am not so naive as to believe that I know it all and cannot be taught. I know a few men who, I believe, have reached the plateau that they believe no one can teach them anything. I do not believe you fall into that category at all. And, I was shocked that you interpreted my comments to imply that you had taken this view as a result of friendship or politics, or anything else having to do with maintaining favor. I am sure that I did not express myself plainly and wish to emphasize that I do not believe you to be anyone's puppet. I would not respect you at all if that is what I thought of you. However, I am deeply in debt to those who have taught me over the years the more perfect understanding of God's word. I believe that we can all be taught, and that teaching must come, not only from our own study, but as a result of the study of others. If this were not the case, then, as I told Stanley Lockhart one time: If we should not teach others concerning controversial subjects, all we have to do is give them a bible and tell them to study for themselves, and the [*sic*] we, as preachers, can go fishing. That is one of the clarion benefits of the lectureship books that the lectureships have produced; to glean from the knowledge of others.

One last thought: Should I be surprised that Mac is moving to PS? I am totally underwhelmed at Harry! If it was not evident that they were sympathetic to Mac's doctrine before, this should remove all doubt. I expect that there will be a few to drive to Denton from Brown Trail now.

Much love to you and Lavonne,

Eddie

July 7, 2005
Mr. Eddie Whitten
1102 N. Paseo De Golf
Green Valley, AZ 85614

908 Imperial
Denton, TX 76201

Dear Eddie:

Thanks for your prompt response. Please pardon mine for being rather tardy again. Besides various writing deadlines, we had Laurie (Andy's wife) and their two young ones (12, 8) with us for a week soon after your letter arrived. I began this response June 18 on a flight from DFW to Columbus, OH, for a Gospel meeting at Pomeroy, OH.... Various other things, including a visit from Hal (our older son) and family, have "conspired" to prevent my finishing my response before now.

My defense for writing at such length is the numerous items in your letter that I felt warranted addressing. Neither severity nor anger were in my heart as I wrote. If I failed in my intent to discuss this issue "frankly and openly, yet as a gentleman," I apologize. I did not write to rebuke, but merely to affirm strongly my convictions. Your letter would better qualify as a rebuke, although I sincerely accepted your condemnation of my convictions as "brotherly" and out of an "obviously sincere concern" for me. (I did not refer to your convictions as "disconcerting," "strange ideas about MDR," "new wrinkle," "erroneous position," "invention," "error," and "a matter of salvation involved." And, had I not already known your position, I would not have been "really taken aback" upon learning it, for truly, although we disagree, I do not hold our disagreement on this issue to be one of concern. Can we not test and discuss this (or any other issue) forthrightly as long-time friends without invective, pejoratives, and judgmental terminology, and without attribution of malevolent motive? This is certainly my desire and intent....

You are right in saying that our basic disagreement is a matter of timing, a fact I have known all along. This should be the end of the matter as far as I'm concerned. If I have "misconstrued the civil divorce thing" as you understand it, I did not do so intentionally. Maybe you can help me understand it. Let me, as briefly as possible, call attention to what I believe is a basic contradiction in your recent letter (and your position):

God does not, repeat not, HONOR a divorce without fornication being the reason for the divorce. He does recognize the civil divorce which makes any subsequent sexual involvement adultery.

To me this appears to be a semantics exercise by saying in one sentence that God does not "honor" a pre-fornication divorce, but then saying immediately that He "recognizes" such a divorce. In what sense does He "recognize" it without "honoring" it? How can one separate the actions of "honoring" and "recognizing" such a divorce? If God "recognizes" a pre-fornication civil "divorce," in what sense is the couple still "married" and why would remarriage constitute adultery? If you say they are still married (per Mat. 19:6) in spite of the civil "divorce," how can God be said either to "recognize" or to "honor" the "divorce" in any sense? Note: It is not, as you say, God's recognition of "the civil divorce which makes any subsequent sexual involvement adultery." Rather, sexual involvement with another besides one's God-joined spouse is adultery **with or without a civil divorce**,

because the couple is still married to each other before God. Here is where I need help with my understanding of just what you believe concerning "the civil divorce thing."

According to Matthew 19:9, a "divorce" decree obtained before one's mate has committed fornication is nothing more than a blank piece of paper as far as God is concerned, which He neither recognizes **nor** honors. Such a decree allows neither spouse to (1) be free from the original God-joined union (v. 6) nor to (2) be entitled to a second God-joined union (v. 9). The only sense in which God "recognizes" such civil divorce decrees is that he knows that people seek them and that the state grants them (i.e., He is omniscient), but they are powerless as far as He is concerned. To put it another way, to Him, such a "divorce," though granted by the state, **has not even occurred**, thus leaving the couple still married to each other.

I could write (and promise "salvation" based on) a new version of Mark 16:16a as follows: "He that believeth and is not baptized shall be saved," but it would be meaningless (i.e., in relation to altering God's will in the matter), although God would be quite aware (i.e., would "recognize") that I had written it. Just so, a judge can write (and grant "divorces" based on) a new version of Matthew 19:9a as follows: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for incompatibility, and shall marry another, committeth adultery." However, this rewrite would be just as meaningless in relation to God's will in the matter as the rewrite of Mark 16:16a. That many preach the rewrite of Mark 16:16a does not mean that those who are not baptized can be saved. Furthermore, that many judges issue "divorce" decrees based on the rewrite of Matthew 19:9a does not mean that such couples are no longer bound together by God. Such "divorces" have no standing whatsoever with God.

The significance of "**let not man put asunder**" (v. 6b) is that man not only does not have the right, but that he also **does not have the ability** to sunder the joining done by God. You are likely familiar with the sermon idea (you may have even preached it), "Let Not Man Put Asunder," based on this passage. I first saw it in about 1960, and I preached it many times through the years. It starts by applying the clause to the immediate context of husband and wife, and then moves to such things as faith and works, Christ and the church, baptism and salvation, and such like. The unifying point of all such items is that if God has joined them together, it is impossible for men to sunder them from each other. Only God could do so. I believe this just as strongly about a husband and wife as I do about the other things I have listed, and a mere legal document labeled "divorce" will not do it. While God has not given us any exceptions regarding the other things he has bound together, he has given the fornication exception regarding a husband and wife. He will unjoin them on that ground while they both are living, but upon no other. It matters not how many judges grant how many "divorces" upon how many conditions other than the Lord's one—such decrees do not effect the joining God has done in any way. If such a "divorce" is meaningless to God, how can that worthless piece of paper (i.e., a "no divorce" to God) render the subsequent fornication of a spouse invalid, thus preventing the innocent spouse from claiming the very ground upon which God will unjoin those He had once joined?

Couples "divorced" with no fornication involved (assuming they were joined together by God, Mat. 19:6) are still married

before God (with which I understand you agree), even if they live separately for ten years or for the rest of their lives. The only right to marriage privileges or to a marriage relationship either of them has, **minus the fornication factor**, is reconciling to one another (note, not re-marrying, for they were never un-married to each other). They must remain unmarried **as far as any other mate is concerned** (1 Cor. 7:11).

I was glad to hear you say that you disagreed with Monte Evans in at least two respects and that you understand the phrase, “In God’s eyes” to connote a Scriptural concept. At least some of your persuasion (including Jim Waldron and my long-time friend, Jerry Moffitt) ridicule this expression and reject it as unscriptural, for what reason or reasons I cannot comprehend.

I could find no response to the hypothetical (but certainly not unrealistic) MDR situation I set forth in my previous letter, involving a pre-fornication legal divorce “Joe” obtained from “Jane.” Perhaps a few questions and their answers (some of which I asked, and you did not answer, in my first letter) will help accentuate and elucidate this issue. I would very much like your response. Here is the situation again:

Jane did nothing to bring about the divorce. As already noticed, she sought to **prevent** the divorce. She tried to be **reconciled** to Joe and would have forgiven him, but he refused. By marrying Mary, Joe committed fornication, the very ground upon which an innocent spouse may be Scripturally free from the original marriage bond and free to marry again (of course, fornication does not in **itself** dissolve a marriage, but it gives the offended party the **right** to dissolve it and remarry). Jane is an innocent victim, the very one to whom the Lord’s statement gives the right to remarry. However, she cannot now obtain a civil divorce, for legally, Joe has already done that; the civil authorities no longer recognize Joe as still being her husband (although God still does). However, as we have already seen, the legal divorce Joe obtained is meaningless before God. The marriage is thus **Scripturally** ended, giving Jane the **Scriptural** right to remarry, if she chooses.

1. Does “Jane” (in the foregoing example) have a Scriptural (as well as legal, since a legal/civil “divorce” has already been granted) right to consider her marriage to Joe ended, and does she have the legal **and** Scriptural right to remarry someone who is Scripturally eligible to marry?

2. If you say “no” to question 1, please help me understand why.

3. If, as you have said, God does not “honor” Joe’s legal/civil, pre-fornication divorce (in which case it is therefore Scripturally meaningless), what is the difference—Scripturally speaking—in (a) Joe’s **obtaining** such a “divorce” and leaving Jane and (b) his simply **moving out and separating himself from** Jane **without** any “divorce” decree?

4. What if Joe, upon receiving the legal/civil pre-fornication “divorce,” had **not** “married” Mary, but had simply **moved in** with her and they had engaged in fornication? Would Jane have the right to consider her marriage to Joe ended (legally **and** Scripturally) and to remarry some other eligible mate?

5. What if Joe had **not** obtained a legal/civil pre-fornication “divorce” from Jane (and was therefore unable legally to “marry” Mary), but had simply **moved in** with her, engaging in fornication with her? Would Jane have the right to divorce Joe (legally **and** Scripturally) and remarry some other eligible mate?

6. If you answer “yes” to question 5, but “no” to ques-

tions 1 and 4, please explain your reasons. Is it because: (a) Joe filed for and obtained the “divorce,” thus preventing Jane from filing? (b) Joe’s fornication took place **after** he obtained his meaningless (to God) “divorce” from Jane? (c) Joe’s legal/civil pre-fornication “divorce” was “honored” by God after all and was **not** merely a meaningless piece of paper (in which case, civil law has superseded Divine law)? or (d) for some other reason or reasons (please specify)?

7. Since Joe’s pre-fornication, not-“honored”-by-God “divorce” was a meaningless piece of paper (in God’s eyes), what is the Scriptural and moral difference in the situations described between items 4 and 5 above?

8. If Joe got a pre-fornication divorce from Jane and never committed fornication till he died, would Jane then have the right to remarry when he died? If so, why?

9. If Jane’s situation relative to remarriage can change after a pre-fornication divorce because of Joe’s **subsequent** death, why cannot Jane’s situation relative to remarriage change after a pre-fornication divorce because of Joe’s **subsequent** fornication?

10. Do you believe that to say that Jane has a Scriptural right to remarry (per no. 1 above) is an example of playing “the waiting game”?

11. If Guy N. Woods were alive today, would you withdraw your fellowship from him because of his comments in *Questions and Answers*, Volume 2, pp. 45–46?

12. Do you consider yourself no longer in fellowship with me because of my convictions on this issue? Thanks for the reassurance that you do not believe my convictions are either politically or fraternally motivated, on this or any other issue. I could not, however, help inferring that you may have so believed from some of the things you first wrote. Of course, I will continue to learn and sharpen my Biblical knowledge and understanding as long as I possess the faculties to do so, as should we all. I have learned much from many through the years, and I hope to continue to do so. Discussions such as the one in which we are now engaged is one way of doing so.

The matter that troubles me most at present is the fellowship factor and the possibility that good friends of many years, all equally dedicated to the Truth, will part company. We are in the midst of so many crucial spiritual battles in the church, and who knows what the future holds in this regard? So many have already fallen. We need to continue standing as one and fighting these battles together as so many of us have been doing for so many years. When all is said and done, this specific facet of the MDR issue is one that brethren must determine how to approach (1) on the basis of specific MDR situations and (2) on the local congregational level, using all of the prayers we can offer and the wisdom we can muster. Just for the record, this issue will not become one that sunders fellowship, as far as I am concerned, unless brethren who oppose my view bind theirs upon all brethren and label those of us who dare disagree with them as “liberals” and “heretics,” unworthy of their fellowship. I trust that you would not be so radical. Although I obviously believe my position is correct, I have never bound it and have no intention of binding it upon others. Nor will I set others at naught who differ with me on it, just for disagreeing. You know that I have not made this issue a battleground (you didn’t even know my position). I don’t plan to even discuss it unless called upon

to do so, as you have done. I think I have said enough in my two letters for you to know my convictions and their bases, so I see no need to respond further relating to our differences.

Remember:

1. I fully understand and believe that there is one, and only one, Scriptural ground for divorce and remarriage, as set forth in Matthew 19:9.

2. I do not believe in any sort of intentional or manipulative “waiting game” on this subject.

On another subject, we now have a date for the beginning of Mac’s tenure at PS—August 7. However, I have the PS bulletins, up to and including the one for last Sunday, and there is still no mention of Mac’s coming. In fact, Chester Cullum is still listed as “Evangelist.” Maybe they no longer read their own bulletin!

In brotherly love,

Dub

PS There is now some serious talk among ex-PS members and some other sound brethren nearby about starting a new congregation in Denton. It would seem that a city of almost 100,000 should have at least one faithful congregation. PPS By snail mail, I am taking the liberty of sending you a copy of Terry Hightower’s FSOP chapter on this subject.

Brother Whitten chose not to respond to brother McClish. Thus, their correspondence concerning MDR ended with the conclusion of McClish’s preceding email.—EDITOR

“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Matthew 3:10)

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**“FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND
HATE ERROR.”**

Editorial Introduction to “Current Crises Challenging the Church”

Until approximately mid-summer of 2005 there was not a teacher at MSOP that we did not consider to be a friend and a faithful gospel preacher. We did not hesitate to recommend brethren to support MSOP as well as urge prospective students to attend it. As far as we were concerned it was the only school of its kind that we were interested in supporting.

In the last year, however, we have seen a “paradigm shift” in the MSOP that we did not see coming. However, the plans for that change must have been contemplated for some time in the minds of those who cannot stand the thoughts of MSOP turning out preachers in the mold of Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Guy N. Woods, G. K. Wallace, Ira Y. Rice, Jr. N. B. Hardeman, E. R. Harper and so on. Now the school seeks to pattern itself after Freed-Hardeman University, or Faulkner University, and thereby present a more balanced view of religious matters to the church.

We well remember when FHU made its “turn around” or paradigm shift in 1977. Fresh in our minds is the memory of then President E. Claude Gardner, along with William Woodson, and Tom Holland at the 1977 FHU Lectures attempting to defend their use of the likes of Batsell Barrett Baxter of David Lipscomb University and the Herald of Truth, Neal Lightfoot of ACU, Jim Bill McInteer of the present 21st Century Christian, to name a few of that stripe of preacher who were brought to the FHU lecture program that year to bring balance back to the FHC Lectureship and the school. Thus, FHU took itself off of the firing line in the battle against any and all kinds of evil, with Holland and Woodson ending their academic careers as teachers at David Lipscomb University.

*No wonder that in the fall of 2005 Woodson was laughing at MSOP as the school came under attack by “radicals” that he, from his 1977 perspective, thought MSOP epitomized when they (MSOP) opposed him and the 1977 FHU Lectureship. Yes, the 1977 FHC Lectures turned out to be the signal turning point that declared to the church the path on which on which FHU has now been traveling for at least a third of a century. The use of Baxter, et al. in the 1977 FHC Lectures was the school’s public proclamation that they were determined to be more balanced. Thus, Woodson laughed at the thought of MSOP suffering under the same kind attacks from “radical” brethren who were, from Woodson’s mindset, once epitomized by MSOP itself. And, not that long ago, Woodson predicted that since MSOP had shifted to the more balanced side of the church (whatever that means), this would mean the death of the “radicals” in the church. **We cannot help but wonder what Cates thinks about being in the same “balanced” bed with Woodson.***

The following article by Bobby Liddell, Associate Director of MSOP, is a good example of where brethren once were, but are not anymore. Certain brethren have learned through recent events that put their faith to the test that they had too much invested in certain things and persons too go only where the Truth leads them. They are, therefore, unwilling to make the necessary sacrifices to continue to stand where they once stood.

In the following article by brother Liddell we see his attitude toward the rank liberals when he wrote the article.

In 1992 he was able to identify the marks of those then who were well on their way to full apostasy. Notice his concluding comments about those brethren who attack faithful preachers who expose and refute false teachers. Also, notice what he says about those weak-kneed brethren who call for a more balanced approach to living the Christian life—especially in preaching, writing, and fellowship. We know brother Liddell was greatly concerned about the matters about which he wrote because this was his editorial for that issue of *The Defender*. As in the April 2006 CFTF we noticed that the 2006 Curtis Cates is not the Cates of 1995, we now see that the 2006 Bobby Liddell is not the same as the Liddell of 1992. Said change is most obvious in these two men's fellowship of Dave Miller, Stan Crowley, TGJ Board, AP, GBN, et al.

—EDITOR

Current Crises Challenging the Church

Bobby Liddell

The church of our Lord stands at a crossroads. Many who once walked among the faithful have turned aside to follow the doctrines of men and their own stubborn will. In the forefront of this new digression are some who are well known and who have acquired a devoted following. In time past, many of these false teachers were proclaimers of the faith. In contrast to the great apostle Paul, who preached the faith he once destroyed, they now seek to destroy the faith they once preached (Gal. 1:23). Boldly, they proclaim “new” truths and “new” hermeneutics to support them.

They sneeringly disdain God's approved pattern as outdated “traditionalism” and mask their old threadbare denominational doctrines as “progress” and needed “change” in a “church in transition” in a changing world.

Have we so soon forgotten men of faith and courage, only a generation ago, routed the same errors which false brethren now embrace and advanced the cause of Christ in public debate with denominational opponents who were at least honest enough to identify themselves as different from and opposed to the church of Christ? “Oh, for an honest false teacher.”

Others, working quietly in leadership roles in local congregations have orchestrated subtle changes designed to gradually lead men away from the pure gospel of Christ. To compound the problem, a generation of spiritual illiterates has provided ready adherents who love to have it so. Do they not know they, in departing from the gospel are running headlong into the clutches of Satan and the accompanying miseries and eternal damnation? It seems they do not or they do not care and will not be warned.

What shall those who seek to faithfully follow God's will do? Ignoring the fact of the departure of formerly faithful brethren will not solve the problem. Surely, we owe our brethren more than that (Galatians 6:1)!

First, we must be aware there is a real and present danger which threatens the eternal salvation of brethren and those whom they influence and which significantly hinders the work of the Lord's people. Sadly, many would rather hide their heads in the sand and pretend there is no prob-

lem! They do not discern false doctrine when they hear it and will heed no warnings against it. Brethren, Satan is wreaking havoc among the churches! How can we say there is no problem?

Second, we must fortify ourselves to fight the good fight of faith (I Timothy 6:12), putting on the Christian's armor (Ephesians 6:10-18) and preparing ourselves to capably and courageously wield the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Sitting back hoping error and its proponents will somehow self-destruct, thus, freeing us from having to face the issues or fight the battles is the coward's way out. Let us be set for the defense of the gospel (Philippians 1:17) and ready to oppose error wherever it may be and whoever may uphold it (Ephesians 5:11). Then, when problems arise and men oppose the truth, we shall be ready to recognize the threat and to deal with it appropriately.

Finally, we must stop attacking faithful brethren who would, out of genuine love for Christ and His church, sound the warning against uncertain sounds and deceitful workers. Instead, let us focus our energies on the real problems and the real troublemakers of Israel (I Kings 18:17-18). It has always amazed me how some who claim to be “balanced” will either uphold error and false teachers or will refuse to stand in opposition to it and them. Are they not guilty (II John 9-11)? Yet, that same “balanced” brother will viciously and maliciously attack and publicly vilify one who has the intestinal fortitude to stand up and say: “This is wrong and those who teach it or practice it are wrong.”

God help us to have courage to face in faith the current crises!

(The Defender, Vol. 21, No. 4, April, 1992)

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flies in the face of the law of rationality, which law simply stated is: *We ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence.* Of a truth, the design and end of such deceitful antics wherever and whoever employs them, is to cause one to focus on something other than the adequate evidence or the lack of it. *It is nothing more than a ploy to keep the truth on anything from being ascertained*

Godly brethren are of the Truth, and in everything pertaining thereto they have not only the right, but an obligation, to know the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. NO PERSON HAS THE RIGHT TO HINDER ANYONE FROM GETTING AT THE TRUTH CONCERNING ANY SUBJECT, PERSON, OR OCCURRENCE THAT HAS TO DO WITH THEM AND THEIR WORK BY LABELING SUCH MATTERS **CONFIDENTIAL**.

Do I believe there is a time and place for confidentiality? Indeed, I do. Here is one reason why such is the case—*any material may be kept confidential if in so doing no wrong is done or right left undone by keeping such information in confidence.* Where does anyone find a direct statement, example, and/or implication in the Bible that authorizes keeping something confidential when such would handicap or hinder one from, not only what they have a right to know, but what, before God, they ought and must know in order to make Scriptural expedient decisions for their as well as others spiritual well-being in said matters. It certainly would be a sin to keep something confidential that was needful for one to know or possess in working out his/her own salvation (Philippians 2:12). And, these previous matters bear directly on what people such as Dave Miller, Stan Crowley, Joseph Meador, Curtis Cates, GBN, AP, and company believe, teach, and practice and whether we will or will not fellowship them. Especially is this the case when such brotherhood organizations beg and almost demand financial support from the churches and individual Christians to finance their projects. Brethren not only have a right, but an obligation to, at the very least, know what those who comprise these projects believe and how they conduct their own lives. *If they want our money, they must be forthcoming with Scriptural answers to our questions as well as open and above board in their conduct.*

A prime Old Testament example of one holding in confidence that which plunged him and his wife, and a number of other people into trouble, is that of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 12 and 20). On two separate occasions (one time to Pharaoh and another time to Abimelech) the couple agreed between themselves to keep confidential their married status. When Abraham told the previously

named two men that Sarah was his sister, he told the truth—Sarah was his half sister—and, at least to the Hebrews of that day, a half sister was one's sister. However, one big problem with Abraham's statement regarding his relationship with Sarah WAS THAT HE WITHHELD FROM THE PREVIOUSLY NAMED TWO MEN THE IMPORTANT FACT THAT HE AND SARAH WERE ALSO HUSBAND AND WIFE—NECESSARY INFORMATION FOR SAID MEN TO KNOW IN VIEW OF THEIR INTENTIONS TOWARD SARAH. Yes, each man desired to marry Sarah. In both cases a mess was created because of an unauthorized and therefore sinful confidentiality that was conceived and practiced by Abraham and Sarah. God had to intervene in said affairs to straighten everything out.

May we not deduce at least one vital lesson from these two accounts in the lives of Abraham and Sarah in view of the fact that they were written for our learning (Romans 15:4)? Surely we may correctly conclude from said events in the lives of Abraham and Sarah that *no one has authority from God to keep back information from others who not only have a right to know, but a need to know that they may not sin against God. What is so difficult to understand about this principle of Godly conduct?* As Luke records Paul saying to the Ephesian elders:

“And how I kept back nothing [that I shrank not from declaring unto you anything—ASV, 1901] that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). **“Prove all things, hold fast that which is good”** (I Thessalonians 5:21) demands that we know whatever it takes to make a Scriptural decision in determining what is good and what is not. Therefore, when people know that under the guise of confidentiality they are keeping necessary information from others who must know it in order to comply with Colossians 3:17 and I Thessalonians 5:21, they are sinning when they withhold it. Thus, we learn a very important point— **THERE IS A BIBLICALLY AUTHORIZED CONFIDENTIALITY AND A CONFIDENTIALITY THAT IS NOT AUTHORIZED BY THE BIBLE.** God expects us to recognize the difference in the two kinds of confidence and act accordingly. There is no Bible authority for one to hold in confidence any facts about anything or anybody that allows error to be propagated and/or anyone or anything to be hurt. To accuse someone, or only tell part of something about someone or a situation while withholding necessary information, then stamp such comments confidential, is to admit

that one does not desire the accused to have the opportunity to examine and respond to such matters. Besides other sins, such an attitude violates the Golden Rule. Nevertheless certain brethren seemingly have no compunction of conscience in attempting to hinder the facts on certain matters from being known. *It is sin to act accordingly.*

At this time no one has been more adept at trying to keep confidential what others have a right, obligation, and need to know regarding brotherhood problems than Curtis Cates (Although, in certain correspondence concerning Dave Miller, Bert Thompson rivales Cates in his attempt to keep hidden matters that faithful brethren have the right and obligation to know from being known. Thompson went so far as to copyright certain letters in his attempt to keep them from the brethren. And, he has never repented of such action.) In the matters concerning the departure of McClish and Watson from TGJ, Dave Miller and Stan Crowley's false doctrines, GBN, and so on, Cates does not desire to have one examine and evaluate his comments and letters relating thereto. From time to time we also hear what Cates and others of his mentality say about us and others who stand where we stand on said matters. However, it seems that most of Cates' comments about us relating to said matters fall into the category of the ad hominem. By engaging in such antics Cates has lowered himself to at least the level of the previously noted adulterous man's lawyer. Hence, Cates remarks regarding McClish, Watson, Dave Miller et al., are designed to divert his hearers from the evidence in said matters to his own twisted tales. Brother Cates (although he is not the only one) thinks he has the right to say whatever he pleases to and about anyone, no matter how derogatory it is, then stamp **CONFIDENTIAL** on the conversation or document. Thereby, Cates is attempting to prohibit those same people from even knowing what he said about them, much less have the opportunity to respond to him. I do not know where he and others learned such tactics, but the Bible nowhere authorizes such action. One would think with all of the men of The Book with whom he has a close association, at least one of them would point these matters out to brother Cates. Unless, among other things, they too have become adept and well practiced in the use of the Argumentum ad Hominem. If that is the case with these brethren, the law of rationality has fallen upon poor soil at MSOP.

—David P. Brown, EDITOR

THE CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING II JOHN 9-11

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

This trio of valiant verses reads:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that bideth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

CAN ONE REMAIN FAITHFUL WHILE IGNORING THIS TEACHING?

A gigantic NO and for reasons both cogent and convincing at least to the mind that loves truth and loves it supremely, to the mind that loves righteousness and hates iniquity as our blessed Lord did (See Psalms 45:6; Heb. 1:8,9). Ten reasons will now be numbered and noted.

1) These three verses constitute a portion of God's word. If one can ignore three verses with impunity, why not three hundred verses, three thousand verses or thirty thousand verses which gets nearly all the 31,102 verses from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21? John did not write these three verses to be ignored. The Holy Spirit did not inspire these three verses to be ignored. God the Father and God the Son, the real originators of all truth, did not direct the Holy Spirit to convey them to John to be ignored when once written.

2) To ignore a potent passage like this shows spineless toleration for error and no real regard for maintaining a sound faith and a faultless practice. Please recall that there is only one acceptable stance for any soldier of Christ toward any error, toward all error -- EXPOSURE AND OPPOSITION.

3) To ignore such shows that one is not really concerned with the doctrine Christ taught and/or had others proclaim in his name so faithfully and fervently. To despise the doctrine of Christ is to despise Deity who authored the doctrine or teaching.

4) To ignore such means that one thinks as highly of error and the errorists, who push and promote such, as of truth and the dedicated soldiers of Calvary who preach and practice such. A person of such disposition surely cannot love righteousness and hate iniquity as did our Lord.

5) To ignore such makes impossible our abiding in the doctrine of Christ and this means that we forfeit both God the Father and Christ the Son. We cannot have one without the other and we cannot have either minus the doctrine of Christ.

6) To ignore such means that we are giving our stamp of approval to every flagrant falsehood and erroneous error that comes along. It means that we are supportive of those who would destroy the very cause of Christ on earth.

7) To ignore such means that we are really more interested in the spread of error than in the spread of saving truth and this defeats the very purpose of our being.

8) To ignore such means that our homes would soon become the very citadels of every corruptible error that comes along. The concept of CHRIST IN THE HOME could NOT remain in such surroundings at all. Children would soon be

corrupted by such devious influences ever surrounding them.

9) To ignore such would place us in the position of influencing all others to ignore this same passage and its weighty warning. We would thus become a millstone around the necks of others pulling them down into the waters of destruction.

10) To ignore such is the equivalent of erecting a sure blockade toward our going home to heaven at last. Ignoring Scripture and going home to heaven are incompatibles.

HOW SHOULD THE FAITHFUL REGARD THOSE IGNORING THIS PASSAGE?

The very same way that John would have regarded the elect lady and her children had they responded back with a rousing rejection of this sage, apostolic counsel. John did not write it for the initial readers to reject it, ignore it or defy it. He wrote it to be believed and practiced with dedication and permanence. Had they rejected or ignored it, it would have produced a very serious rupture between John and this Christian family. No longer would John have designated her as “**the ELECT lady**” (v.1). No longer would he have commended her children because they walked in truth (v.4). No longer would he have referred to this family as ones “*whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth...*” (v.1). John would still have loved them but they would no longer have been fellow-dwellers in the righteous realm of kingly truth. No longer would he have referred to the fact that truth indwelt this lady and her children (v.2). No longer would he have anticipated a fullness of joy in a face-to-face meeting (v.12). No longer could he have conveyed joyful greetings from the children of her elect sister—her faithful nephews and nieces. Rejection of truth always mars such family ties in Christ. It would have broken the heart of the aged apostle had he learned that this esteemed lady and her children treated with contempt and a sneer such precious points as he incorporated into this trio of truthful admonitions, these needed exhortations. John would have

surmised promptly that the whole scope of Biblical teachings relative to discipline would have been in serious jeopardy with this lady and her children. This would have been inclusive of instructive discipline and corrective discipline and both of these get nearly the whole of apostolic doctrine. Instructive discipline is very comprehensive including all New Testament truth designed to keep us in the way that is holy and right.

But even more important than John’s disappointment would have been Deity’s view of such. Can anyone imagine that the Timeless Trinity would view such rejection with ardency of approval, with pleasure ready to be pronounced? Jesus pleased the Father by honoring his will. This is the only way we can please God now—by heeding and honoring his will and that will is intently inclusive of II John 9-11.

Deep suspect should be our attitude toward any person who would tamper with truth as set forth in these three verses of towering truth. What about those who once knew the truth of these passages, believed these passages, faithfully proclaimed them, defended them when they came under attack and lived in harmony therewith but now have rejected them or rewritten them. The reason is very evident why some have turned from these passages or have rewritten them. They want to join hands with denominational groups like the *Independent Christian Church*. They wish to count them as long lost brethren. With others, they want to be invited to their growth seminars and teach them how to grow a thriving denominational church. They wish to be in full fellowship with such. The principles of II John 9-11 condemn in forthright language such compromises and so these spiritual weaklings have rewritten or out rightly ignored what John wrote here. Such people have left the truth PERIOD!!! They should be warned. If the marking works no change for the better, they should be avoided as per Romans 16:17-18. Some of our hedging brethren evidently have ignored the Romans passage as well as II John 9-11. A rejection or ignoring of these passages cannot be treated with lightness. It is a momentous

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matter that is solemn and serious. We are to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness as per Ephesians 5:11 and these are definitely of that order when they come with their Christ-denying doctrines of flagrant falsehood and fatal errors. We are straitly forbidden to receive such or convey to such God speed or good speed in the spread of their nefarious notions of wrong and wickedness (**SEEK THE OLD PATHS**, page 90, Vol. 11, No. 11 November, 2000).

—265 Thompson Avenue
Ripley, TN 38063

Amen, brother Taylor. What a "trio of valiant verses." How "cogent and convincing" they are to those who love the Truth. No more "potent passage" can be found in the Bible. How is it possible for a gospel preacher to write and speak such Truth and be inconsistent in the practice of the same? However we have seen a lot of it these days. The "tragic travesty of truth" is in the lack of brethren such as brother Taylor practicing what he so well preaches. Jesus warned his disciples about the scribes and Pharisees conduct "Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat: All there-

fore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not" (Matthew 23:3) It is terribly disappointing to see any child of God who has spoken and written so much and strongly against the practice of "Unity in Diversity" to now shamelessly practice it regarding Dave Miller, Stan Crowley, and that buddyhood. Taylor and friends would never remain in fellowship with Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado and that group of false brethren, but they will do so to such false teachers as Miller and Crowley. Obviously the application of the Truth is considerably different when applied to the Shelly crowd than when applied to Miller, Crowley, and that closenit buddyhood of a modified form of "unity in diversity." Since they have managed to fellowship Miller and company, why not induct Mac Deaver, Buster Dobbs, John Waddey and the like into the fellowship of their buddyhood as well? Though the previously listed men's errors are somewhat different, Deaver, Dobbs, and Waddey are no more or less false teachers than are D. Miller, S. Crowley, and their supporters. AND THAT IS NOT NEARLY IT, THAT IS IT.

—EDITOR

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7:00 pm	<i>God's Wd., the Home's Standard</i>	Wayne Coats
8:00 pm	<i>Man's Role in the Home</i>	John West

Saturday, June 10

9:00 am	<i>God's Law on M. D. R.</i>	Paul Vaughn
10:00 am	<i>Woman's Role in the Home</i>	Hal Smith
11:00 am	<i>Evolution's Effect on the Home</i>	John West

Saturday Luncheon

1:00 pm	<i>Dating</i>	Jerry Murrell
2:00 pm	<i>Selecting a Mate</i>	Michael Shepherd

Sunday, June 11

9:00 am	<i>Children Obey Their Parents</i>	Jerry Murrell
10:00 am	<i>What Does It Mean to Love?</i>	Paul Vaughn

Sunday Luncheon

1:00 pm	<i>Parents Are to Train Their Children</i>	Hal Smith
2:00 pm	<i>Liberalism's Effect on the Home</i>	Wayne Coats

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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.

Tuscaloosa-East Pointe Church of Christ one block from Exit 76, off I-20, I-59, Sun. 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed., 7 p.m. Abiding in God's Word—The Old Paths. U of A student, visitor, or resident? Welcome! (205)556-3062.

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

-Georgia-

Cartersville- Church of Christ, 1319 Joe Frank Harris Pkwy NW 30120-4222. 770-382-6775, www.cartersvillechurchofchrist.org. Sun. 10, 11a.m., 6:30 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Bobby D. Gayton, evangelist- email: bdgayton@juno.com.

-Indiana-

Evansville-West Side Church of Christ, 3232 Edgewood Dr., Evansville, IN 47712, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 6:30 p.m., Larry Albritton, evangelist.

-Louisiana-

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

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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.

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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.

Hubbard-105 NE 6th St., Hubbard, TX 76648, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Delbert J. Goines, evangelist; djgoines@writeme.com.

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

Hurst (Fort Worth area)-Northeast Church of Christ, 1313 Karla Dr., P.O. Box 85, Hurst, TX 76053. Sun. 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m. (817) 282-3239, Toney Smith and Dan Flournoy, evangelists.

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.

-Wyoming-

Cheyenne-High Plains Church of Christ, 421 E. 8th St., Cheyenne, WY 82007, tel. (307) 638-7466, Sunday: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Tel. (307) 635-2482. evangelist: Tim Cozad.

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