

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR ELDERS, PREACHERS, TEACHERS, AND CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

AT THE RIVER'S EDGE: MEETING JESUS IN BAPTISM (A REVIEW)

Gary W. Summers

Recently many churches have received a booklet and a letter from the College of Biblical Studies at Abilene Christian University. The letter is addressed, "Dear church leader," and is signed by **Jack R. Reese**, who is the dean of the aforementioned college. The opening words are: "Preaching baptism and practicing it faithfully are crucial for the church in these days." While we agree wholeheartedly with that statement, the irony is that men like distinguished Carmichael Professor, **Carroll D. Osburn** (from Abilene Christian University) are the ones who have undermined the Bible's teaching on this subject, insisting that whether we baptize for or because of the remission of sins should not be a barrier to fellowship.

Therefore, we seek pardon for being a tad skeptical of anything coming out of ACU regarding the role that baptism plays in salvation. The booklet is designed to give people insight into baptism (which it does, in part). ACU's goal is that it will be used as a basis for Bible study in adult classes and youth groups. Such a decision would not be wise because, despite a few excellent thoughts, the material is seriously flawed.

The authors are **Jeff W. Childers** and **Frederick D. Aquino**. The former of these co-authored *The Crux of the Matter* (along with Jack Reese). In this book, faithful members of the church and Gospel preachers are accused of being judgmental and legalistic. Brethren are told that the authors, in their "study of the scriptures began to call into question some of the conclu-

sions we had reached in earlier decades" (18). Really? Why? The Bible still teaches by direct statement, approved example, and implication. What has changed? If someone comes along and shows a better way of doing things, we would all profit. If someone demonstrates that we have been guilty of poor interpretation techniques, fine—show us the better principle. But we are not about to trade fundamentally sound principles just because certain "professors" are bored with them. They further write:

Third, as we began to move out of our isolation and have real dialogue and relationship with people from other religious groups, many of us were astonished to see demonstrations of the fruit of the Spirit in their lives. Some of *them* seemed to evidence more Christian virtues than many of *us*. How could this be, if they had not come to the right understanding of the truth as we saw it (18)?

Commenting on this paragraph in February of 2001, this reviewer wrote:

Read this paragraph again, for this is truly "the crux of the matter." The faulty assumption is that denominational people have the fruit of the spirit and thus must be saved; the truth is that they have the *appearance* of the fruit because they have followed the teachings of the word of God with respect to those things. The Holy Spirit inspired the scriptures, and when people follow them, they are better for it. Many denominational folk have given up being immoral because the scriptures teach against it.... In fact, that

(Continued on Page 4)

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

EDITORIAL...

Going, Going, Gone

[At the close of last month's editorial I wrote I would continue to examine some of Mac Deaver's material in this month's CFTF. However, as is obvious from the contents of this issue I decided to deal with Abilene Christian University instead. The Lord willing I will examine more of M. Deaver's material in later issues of the paper.—Editor]

In 1993 I wrote a booklet entitled "Abilene Christian University 'Ever Changing, Never Changing'?" In that booklet I exposed some of ACU's unscriptural acts of that time. On the inside front cover of that booklet I quoted from three speakers of past ACC lectureships. The quotes were printed to show that ACU was not in 1993 governed and guided by the same standard that governed her when the speeches and sermons containing the previously noted quotes were delivered—no matter what **Dr. Jack Reese** of ACU or anyone else in or out of the school says to the contrary. Moreover, men who believed as these men believed at the time they delivered their speeches and sermons containing these quotes would not be allowed to speak on the ACU Lectures or even considered for administrative or faculty positions today. I am including those quotes in this editorial. Following those long ago quotes please notice the lengthy quote from a sermon by **Mike Cope** in 1996.

FROM EIGHTY YEARS AGO

What is the fact in the matter of the way to Heaven? Two or more roads or just one? This is very definitely fixed by Christ himself in His contrast of the two destinations, and the two ways leading to them. He says, 'the way leading to life is narrow and few find it, but the way leading to destruction is broad and many go that way.' See Matthew 7:13. By no sort of juggling of words of logical scheming can this passage be made to say that there are many ways to Heaven (**John T. Hinds**, "Coming to God," *Abilene College Lectures*, 1924-1925, page 202).

FROM SIXTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

Denominationalism is the curse and bane of the age. So long as it remains to mislead and deceive the people, our work will not be finished. It is our duty fearlessly to unsheath the sword of the Spirit, boldly go forth to battle, and plunge it into the very heart of sectarianism, until mangled and bleeding, it is left to die in its own shame (**Guy N. Woods**, "Christianity in a Changing World," *Abilene Chris-*

tian College Lectures, 1939, page 57).

FROM FIFTY-TWO YEARS AGO

As I stand here and apprehend the thousands of elders and preachers that have been here in previous years, and have come or would like to be here during the coming week; and I think of the thousands of churches from which they came, I am thankful.... May we be humble and not proud; but resolute in our purpose of standing by the word of God by which Christ exercises his authority. Others before us have been unwilling to let the fires go out; now the matter is in our hands. Let us be careful that the fires of our fathers do not go out (**James Baird**, "Authority in Religion," *Abilene Christian College Lectures*, 1952, pages 166-167).

FROM MIKE COPE EIGHT YEARS AGO

...I remember clearly the night that I took my Baptist girlfriend to church and heard the preacher talk about Baptists and Christians as two distinct groups. I wasn't ready for her angry reaction, because I had never thought of any other option. It made perfect sense to me to speak of it that way. "The Lord's Church" was insider language to mean "the Real One," versus other groups of people who think they are Christians — people in the denominations. ...

...Tried to make sure that point was made by putting corner stones on our buildings that said the Church was built in Jerusalem A. D. 33. Now, people down the road may have a little marker that said built in 1893, but, see, that's the problem, they are latecomers. They are not first century Christians. Our corner stone says built in A. D. 33. Now I can't even conceive of having believed that. I don't blame anyone for my having believed it. It's what I believed. But I have learned a lot about it. It is an "illusion of innocence." It's a generation that starts this wonderful, healthy, vibrant movement. And then another generation comes along and forgets all that was healthy and vibrant, and starts to calcify and petrify all that. So that, eventually, we live in this illusion that we are the only ones. If you are not like us in all ways then you are not following God's way. There have been lots of different historical movements out there that have done that. We are but one of them. And there was a lot of security in this for me as a teenager. Lots of comfort in knowing that God has a very select group of people. And we were that people, (at least if we weren't wrong on some doctrinal issues). But two problems happened. Problem number one: I went to Harding University and sat in a class where **Jimmy Allen** taught the Book of Romans. A lot of you don't know

In This Issue...

AT THE RIVER'S EDGE: MEETING JESUS IN BAPTISM (A REVIEW) Gary W. Summers	1
EDITORIAL... Going, Going, Gone David P. Brown	2
THE VIC VADNEY AND JACK REESE EMAIL EXCHANGE CONCERNING ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY Vic Vadney and Jack Reese	7

Jimmy Allen, but some of you do, you remember his sermon on Hell, remember the temperature as he preached it and so on. But if you studied Church history, a lot of the people with the strongest message on Hell were often the people who believe most vibrantly in the doctrine of Grace.

And it was true with Jimmy Allen.

All my pre-suppositions there about being the only one — and it's just us and nobody else — as I sat in this class and listened to this man that I admired open the Book of Romans and speak about salvation in Jesus Christ — and in him alone — and talk about undenominational Christianity, some cracks started to form around my foundation. ...

... My long-term dream is that Highlands be a part of leading in this. Leading in unity. I tell you, I would love to have a Sunday when **Phil Christopher**, the minister at First Baptist, and I exchange pulpits. Not just a chance to show that we are progressive. I'm not interested in that. Not as a chance to stick it in somebody's face so that they will be bothered. I'm not interested in that either. But as an opportunity to express our mutual faith to other believers and to witness to unbelievers through the unity of God's people. Think of the power if Highlands leads out in calling all believes to unity in Jesus Christ.

The strong contrast between the quotes from brethren Hinds, Woods and Baird and the quote from the sermon delivered at Fifth and Highland Church of Christ, Abilene, Texas on April 21, 1996 by Mike Cope is apparent to anyone who can see through a ladder—to everyone but ACU's Dr. Jack Reese and his blinded spiritual kith and kin.

—David P. Brown, Editor

At the River's Edge...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

many live a purer life does not prove they are Christians, either.

This is nothing more than the philosophy of **Max Lucado**, as espoused in an article he wrote eight years ago: "A Dream Worth Keeping Alive: Liking the Fruit But Not the Orchard." Lucado also saw people who possessed the characteristics of Galatians 5:22-23, and he too wrongly concluded, "Why, they must be Christians." Who knows what will happen if he meets a patient Buddhist? In keeping with the spirit of this age, the means of determining who is a Christian has passed from objective criteria to subjective—from "Has he obeyed the gospel?" to "Does he seem nice?"

That review went on to emphasize the importance of approaching the Bible *objectively*—to use the *scriptures* to determine who is a Christian, rather than feelings.

STRENGTHS

The River's Edge does have a few strengths. It

affirms that baptism is "a total immersion into him" (referring to Jesus, although the authors never capitalize the personal pronoun) (4). They state correctly: "Baptism is not just a command to be obeyed, an essential requirement to be checked off the list" (5). They periodically elaborate on that point:

We bring them to the riverbank, but we also wait for them on the other side, ready to walk alongside them, telling them stories of the kingdom, challenging them to grow, and providing the resources they need to mature and to serve their Lord (14).

They emphasize the importance of commitment, even going so far as to warn that "following Jesus is not for everyone" (18). They also urge that changed lives should be indicative of all Christians: "Transformation into the image of Christ is the chief aim of the Christian life..." (23). These are all points that the scriptures teach, and they should be emphasized.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT

Since baptism is something that has been emphasized by the churches of Christ, perhaps we ought to explain the reasons for the attention that we give to it. The reason is NOT that it is more important than faith or repentance. In responding to God's grace, we must first decide whether we believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God and whether we believe in the God who inspired that word. Once the evidence leads us to the correct conclusion (John 20:30-31) and we are ready to trust God and his son Jesus to save us from our sins, another major decision must be faced.

Are we willing to repent? Everything else hinges on this point. We may know and be convinced of the truthfulness of the word and the Deity of Christ, but do we really want to give up the sinful things in life that we practice? Many people want to grasp tightly all their worldly lusts and still be a redeemed Christian, but it simply does not work that way. A change in our actions, attitudes, and even our thinking is absolutely essential. Do we trust in God enough to give up sinful things and be satisfied with the spiritual blessings that come in their stead? It is precisely at this point that the most difficult decision is made.

If we determine to belong to God, then confessing that Jesus is the Son of God and

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being baptized are really no problem at all. If we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matthew 5:6), and we know that baptism is required, we will be like those on Pentecost: **“Then those that gladly received his word were baptized”** (Acts 2:41; cf. v. 38). If all this is so, then why do we emphasize baptism?

Primarily, the reason is that there has been a concerted denial of its involvement in salvation. Many are preaching the unbiblical doctrine of “faith only,” which does not allow for repentance, confession, or baptism. Most “sinner’s prayers” do not mention these, either. Thus, we have taken it upon ourselves to call attention to the role of baptism in salvation.

WEAKNESSES AND ERRORS

Therefore, this booklet is greatly disappointing: while it discusses many worthwhile aspects of baptism, it does not take the opportunity to highlight its most crucial element—the forgiveness of sins. The word *blood* does not occur in this booklet, which is remarkable. In fact, stating the truth about the blood of Christ washing away our sins in baptism is not thought worthy of mention, and, to the contrary, the authors think it should be ignored. They write: “Discussing baptism’s essentiality reveals little, but looking into its essence can open our eyes to see the power of Jesus to cleanse and renew broken lives...” (5).

Wait a minute! How can the authors divorce baptism’s essentiality from its essence? Its essence is the very thing that makes it essential. If baptism is involved in man’s obtaining forgiveness of sins (its essence), then how can its essentiality be minimized? Yet the authors of this booklet do minimize baptism. Consider the following two sentences.

Baptism is a marvelous point of entry for disciples and should not be commandeered by agendas that reduce it to a simple rule or that focus solely on debates about its essentiality. Such agendas distract us from the essence of baptism, weakening our understanding of the discipleship it pictures (10).

If the authors are trying to move ACU out from under the dark clouds of suspicion regarding what they teach concerning salvation, this booklet will not accomplish that goal. The above statement insults those who have prepared diligently and debated successfully over the years on this very topic. No one who has ever engaged in the arena of honorable public discussion (by the way, have these men ever presented their views publicly and had them challenged?) ever had any other “agenda” but to teach people the truth concerning what the Bible says. If anyone has an agenda, it would be the authors of this booklet, and their purpose is to direct people’s attention **away** from what the Bible teaches about the essentiality of baptism!

They also affirm that “it’s unlikely that total agree-

ment on every baptismal issue can ever be achieved” (10). What kind of gobbledegook is this? Those who are willing to hear what God has revealed on the matter stand in agreement. A sincere student of the word will want to know what the word transliterated *baptism* means; does the New Testament authorize sprinkling and pouring or only immersion? A true disciple is not going to say that Biblical information is not important.

A true disciple will not be satisfied to be baptized and not know the reasons behind it. Yet the authors scrupulously avoid the fact that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins. In fact, Acts 2:38 is cited only one time in the entire booklet, and it is misapplied: “When a person is baptized ‘in the name of Jesus’ to receive ‘the gift of the Spirit’ (Acts 2:38), he or she is putting on Jesus, like putting on a different suit of clothes or a new skin (Galatians 3:27)” (8). First of all, the verse does not say that we are baptized to receive the gift of the Spirit. Peter spoke thus:

Repent, and let every one of you be baptized for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit is the byproduct of being baptized *for* the forgiveness of sins. Never did Peter or any other New Testament preacher tell sinners to be baptized in order to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Second, why did the authors of this booklet omit the reason that Peter did give for baptism—*for the remission of sins*? This is no accident or oversight; what we find in their words is a deliberate attempt to remove the purpose the inspired Holy Spirit put into the text and replace it with an idea that (although in the text) is not the purpose for baptism.

The writers progress even further in their clumsy efforts to obscure Acts 2:38. They provide three reasons for baptism. The first one refers to John 3:5-8 and the new birth, which is certainly an important passage. But then they say, “Our baptism connects us to the birth of Jesus. It is as if the Spirit of God were hovering over the waters, ready to bring forth a new creation at God’s command (Genesis 1:2)” (9). What exactly is the connection between Jesus’ birth and our new birth, according to them? This text makes no sense.

“Second, in the water, we’re also joining Jesus in the Jordan river. His presence in the water purifies it, transforming it from a muddy stream into the cleansing waters that sanctify us to become his servants” (9). What? Cleansing has nothing to do with the physical quality of the waters (1 Peter 3:21). We are cleansed by the blood of Jesus **WHEN** we obey from the heart the command to be baptized (Romans 6:17-18; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Revelation 1:5).

The third point about joining Jesus in his death, burial, and resurrection is scriptural, and they cite Ro-

mans 6:3-4). But they cannot bring themselves to say that baptism is essential to salvation or that it is the means by which our sins are washed away. Although they argue that we must die to ourselves, there is no hint that we must die to SIN. Romans 6:6 (which they do not mention, although it is in the context) gives both of these: **“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin, For he who has died has been freed from sin”** (Romans 6:6-7).

That the authors harbor a low view of the true purpose of baptism is seen by their opening comments. They describe baptism as “a long-awaited event or the spontaneous response to an inspiring sermon” (3). In what church has baptism been a long-planned event? Someone might make the decision to be baptized and plan for the following day, but we never encourage anyone to put off obedience—particularly for a long time. In the New Testament, all obedience was immediate. What the authors describe sounds more like a ritual than baptism the way it is taught in the New Testament.

This notion was not accidental; they later encourage planning “the structure of Sunday worship around baptismal events” (13). This sounds like what the denominations do when they plan for a baptismal service every six months or so. They do not keep their baptisteries clean and ready for use. They only fill them up once or twice a year for their special public services. If one is going to pick out special clothing for the occasion (13), he certainly does not regard baptism as essential—the way it is presented in the New Testament. The authors (apparently) do not view baptism as the passing from a lost state into a saved one. Why would someone who has been taught about salvation properly want to wait to have his sins removed? Imagine Ananias saying to Paul, “And now why are you waiting? Arise

and go buy some special baptismal clothes and in two weeks we will have a ceremony” (Acts 22:16)!

In their haste to dispense with baptism for the remission of sins, the authors (in effect) challenge the Lord Jesus Christ.

For example, when we ask, “Is baptism the work of God or a human work?” we are forcing a false distinction that does not fit the full incarnational glory of God being unveiled in Christ (10).

Pardon the unsophisticated expression, O erudite and educated writers, but Hogwash! People need to know the answer to that question. If baptism is of men, then it is a work of human merit and cannot be considered part of salvation. If, on the other hand, it is the “working of God” (Colossians 2:12, a scripture not mentioned in this section), then it must be regarded as essential.

Furthermore, did it never occur to these “scholars” that this is the very question Jesus asked? “The baptism of John—where was it from? From heaven or from men?” (Matthew 21:25). Would they deign to take the Lord to task for pitting humanity against God (11)?

More could be said by way of criticism—especially regarding the Holy Spirit (#5, 29), but these comments are sufficient to convey the point that these authors, with the endorsement of Jack Reese, dean of the graduate school of theology, have attempted to sanitize salvation by removing from it the concepts of sin and the blood of Christ shed on the cross. They have tried to remake baptism into a positive, personal, “extreme makeover” experience. We are much safer with the New Testament, which presents baptism as that which removes the sins of the penitent soul, without which he would remain lost.

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THE VIC VADNEY AND JACK REESE EMAIL EXCHANGE CONCERNING ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Vic Vadney and Jack Reese

09:21 PM 3/21/2004:

Dear Dr. Reese:

I am forwarding this email to you so that you may know my concerns, and that I am asking others to examine the evidence. Personally, I am deeply distressed about the situation. ACU has opened the door to dialogue with ICOC (International Churches of Christ—aka: “The Boston Church,” “Crossroads Movement”—Editor) but closed the door to dialogue with Biblical conservatives in the Churches of Christ. ACU’s statement of faith on your net site <http://www.acu.edu/faith.html> appears to be outdated at best, and a mockery at the worst.

Vic Vadney
USA
vjvadney@abilene.com
[HTTP://www.wayhome.org](http://www.wayhome.org)

The preceding email accompanied the following email to Dr. Jack Reese, and the following email was sent to a number of people.

Dear Friends:

The Abilene Christian University (ACU) has taken a bold step in their 2004 Lectureship, and has clearly defined the terms for reforming the Churches of Christ in 21st century. These reforms are already being implemented in many congregations. These reforms will fundamentally change the Church of Christ as we know it. A few of the key elements of this reformation movement are as follows:

1. We should cease our elite and sectarian behavior, and ask our brethren in all denominations to forgive our sins, especially that we said they weren’t saved.
2. We must not say that we have the truth, but that we are on a spiritual journey, just as our brethren in the denominations are on their spiritual journey.
http://www.reporter-news.com/abil/nw_local/article/0,1874,ABIL_7959_2676217,00.html
3. We should have open fellowship with all who say they believe in Jesus. We should follow the example of brave reformists who ask denominational preachers to share pulpits with their congregations. We should also share major social and religious events with our denominational brethren. We should be ecumenical in our thinking and practice, and should openly align ourselves with the current evangelical ecumenical movemnt.
http://www.reporter-news.com/abil/nw_local/article/0,1874,ABIL_7959_2674514,00.html
4. We should continue to say that baptism is important, but that it is not essential for salvation. We should recognize that there are many non-immersed believers who are saved.
<http://home.christianity.com/local/82970.html>

ACU’s 2004 Lectureship can be reviewed by purchasing their CD’s or Tapes. Each of these are \$6.00. You can do so at the following address:

http://www.gayloronline.com/index_flash.html

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To hear for yourself about this radial reformation, consider those tapes or cd’s by the following men:

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Lynn Anderson: Tapes-235-237.

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In celebration of these reform values, ACU recognized their Outstanding Alumnus, **Max Lucado**, preacher of the Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, TX, during their 2004 Lectureship. Max has manifested so much of this new order, and ACU felt that none other could match his attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and accomplishments. Max removed their sign saying "Oak Hills Church of Christ," and replaced it with one saying just "Oak Hills Church." He introduced instrumental music into worship, and has been exchanging pulpits with a Baptist preacher. Max does not believe or practice the belief that baptism is essential for salvation. Rather, he teaches and practices that people are saved when they believe. As a result of these reforms, Max's church has had very rapid growth, and now boasts 4600 members.

http://www.reporter-news.com/abil/nw_local/article/0,1874,ABIL_7959_2674514,00.html

ACU has been practicing these reform principles for some time. A significant number in the ACU student body are from other religious groups, and this has driven many of the changes ACU has made. In addition, ACU has formed alliances with other religious groups, and have even received grants and funds from another religious group to guide the worship in chapel at ACU. As an example of this, please click the following web address: <http://www.acu.edu/campusoffices/chapel/cwfp.html>

Also explore their link to the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship:

<http://www.calvin.edu/worship/>

ACU announced their campaign to raise ten million dollars. They are in debt, and need assistance.

This reformation movement may be a very positive, or a very negative development for you. Since this is a daring and radical unveiling of new values, it is important that you consider communicating your thoughts to the leaders of ACU. You might want to consider helping them financially if you agree with them. Otherwise, if you don't agree with them, you might want to discontinue support. The following names and email addresses are suggested for your consideration:

Don W. Crisp, Chairman of the ACU Board: don_crisp@rosewd.com

Don Drennan, Vice-Chairman of the ACU Board: drendj@aol.com

Dr. Royce Money, President of ACU: moneyr@acu.edu

Dr. David Wray, Undergraduate Department Chair: wray@bible.acu.edu

Dr. Jack Reese, Dean Graduate School of Theology: reese@bible.acu.edu

This is a new age in the Churches of Christ. Unfortunately, this will require change on the part of all. Even those who do not agree with this reformation movement will have to address it. We must speak the truth in love. However, we must be faithful to the truth also. As for me, Joshua said it best: (24:14) Now therefore fear Jehovah, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and serve ye Jehovah. (24:15) And if it seem evil unto you to serve Jehovah, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of these issues. May the Lord give us all wisdom. If you find this information appropriate for others, please feel free to refer them to this site. We need to fully inform the brethren about these issues.

Sincerely,

Vic Vadney

vjadney@abilene.com

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JACK REESE'S FIRST RESPONSE TO VADNEY'S EMAIL

From: Jack Reese [<mailto:jack.reese@acu.edu>]

Sent: Wednesday, March 24, 2004 10:54 AM

To: The Vadneys

Cc: moneyr@acu.edu

Subject: Re: ACU's defining lectureship

Dear Dr. Vadney, I have received your post and want to offer what I hope is an appropriate and measured reply.

First, I hope you have not sent the email contained in your note on to other people without receiving a response from ACU officials first. We live in a day and age in which pernicious gossip is common, gossip which is compounded by the speed and accessibility of the Internet. I know you would not want to participate in such activities. Moreover, I am concerned about the practice of including unpublished and private email addresses to others. Such a practice is a significant breach and one that causes me great concern. But if you have already sent your letter to others before you heard back from Dr. Money or me, I trust you will also send my reply to that same list since your post contains numerous errors and, frankly, misrepresents what is actually taught and done here. I know you will want to do what is fair and right in that regard.

In many ways I am at a loss as to how to respond to your post. It is difficult to overestimate the ways you misunderstand both the functioning of this university and the positions of its faculty and administrators on various issues. I am not going to try to respond point by point, accusation by accusation. I am not confident that such a response would be constructive. But I do want to affirm several things.

Let me be absolutely clear, all ACU faculty believe in the full authority of scripture, believe in baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins, believe that baptism puts us into Christ, that no one is saved other than by the blood of Jesus. If a person believes anything other than this, they cannot be appointed to the faculty of this university. If any current faculty doesn't believe in these core doctrines, they would be terminated. I have found that some people who disagree about various matters sometimes publicly label others as apostate, suggesting that they don't actually believe in the authority of scripture or don't believe in the central place of baptism. I urge you not to be guilty of such a practice. I hope you will receive my affirmation of these core beliefs.

In direct contrast to your accusations, not only are the Bible faculty at ACU not Evangelical in terms of our theological positions, we are often in situations where we challenge the tenets of Evangelicalism publicly. We are clearly not proponents of Evangelicalism, especially the strong Calvinism and weak position on baptism that is typical of most Evangelicals. We are certainly not encouraging our churches to merge with Evangelical churches.

Whatever else ACU is, it is a place where people can talk about issues. We insist on having a campus in which people can talk about their differences in a spirit of love and mutual trust. The ACU Lectureship is an opportunity to model that very thing. Guests who speak at our Lectureship represent themselves and not the university. And they hold a variety of perspectives. You singled out a few that you disagreed with. I disagreed with some of the presenters as well. I'm sure some people disagreed with me. But we will continue to be a place where those diverse perspectives can be voiced in a Christian atmosphere.

There were other viewpoints presented at the Lectureship that you did not refer to in your letter, presentations that did not support the thesis you are making. In fairness, you should probably mention that other presenters expressed quite different perspectives than ones you have indicated.

I would be very careful not to use the Abilene Reporter-News as a reliable source of what may have been said during Lectureship or certainly what faculty and administrators here think or believe. The Reporter-News reporters try very hard to be responsible and accurate in their reporting, and we work very hard to be a good partner with them in the city. But on more than a few occasions, a Reporter-News story has not accurately reflected what was said in a presentation, nor are they able to provide the larger context in which a statement might have been made. This would be true of any newspaper, especially one that functions as an outsider to our brotherhood politics and issues.

Can I tell you frankly that many faculty and administrators at ACU do not agree with everything Max Lucado preaches or practices including some of his public statements about baptism? I certainly don't. These concerns have been expressed to him. You can argue that the Alumni Association of the university should not have given an award to Max. That's fine. I don't know at what point the substantial and internationally-recognized contributions of an alumnus are offset by personal differences or issues. Perhaps the school shouldn't have honored Bobby Morrow back in the 1950s after he won three gold medals in the Olympics. Or maybe the university should have a litmus test of doctrinal beliefs before it recognizes certain world-wide achievements of its graduates. I don't think that reflects what a university does or what an alumni award is designed to indicate, but one can have those opinions. But I do know this: I know that the Oak Hills congregation continues to practice baptism by immersion for forgiveness of sins and that there are often more than 300 baptisms a year in that church.

That's more baptisms than my congregation had last year. I wonder if your congregation had this many baptisms over the past year. I can disagree with Max over many issues but at the same time rejoice that because of his ministry,

some people will be in heaven who wouldn't have been otherwise. Would there ever be a circumstance in which you might rejoice in that?

Dr. Vadney, your assumptions about the state of the university are surprisingly misinformed. ACU has announced a \$150 million campaign (far more than the amount you indicated in your post) not because it is in financial trouble but in order to plan for and support its very bright future. The Centennial Campaign has been planned for many years. The money raised will go to a variety of things—scholarships, endowment, missions training, additional faculty, distance education opportunities, new classroom facilities, etc. The net worth of the university is higher than it has ever been in history. While, like virtually every other university in America, the post-9/11 economy has affected us in the short run, our future is extremely bright. Student enrollment continues to be very strong. Enrollment in the College of Biblical Studies, for example, is at a record high. Enrollment in graduate programs in ministry and missions is off the charts. We have students enrolled in our programs from Harding, Oklahoma Christian, Lipscomb, Freed-Hardeman, and most of our sister schools as well as numerous state universities and foreign countries. Whatever you have heard or assume, the state of the university, financially and otherwise, is stronger than ever.

I hardly know how to respond to some of your statements regarding our relationship to grant-giving institutions. I am not sure you understand how universities function. Receiving a grant from an institution no more allows them to control our practices or beliefs than receiving aid from the federal government allows them to determine the political beliefs of our faculty and students. When my daughter as an English major received financial aid from the U.S. government during the Clinton administration, no one was concerned that she might be influenced to be a Democrat. The notion is ludicrous. I am part of the team using the grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Because we have received that modest grant, we chose to create ways that our chapel services would better include African-American, Hispanic, and International students as well as better connecting to students from small and rural churches. As a result, we sing more Stamps-Baxter songs and occasionally songs in Spanish. We have more men from ethnic minorities serving in leadership roles. That's it. No one outside the university controls the beliefs and practices of this school. No one. Your concerns in this regard, to say the least, are simply misplaced.

Dr. Vadney, I do not assume for a moment that you and I agree on everything. What differences there are are not merely semantic. It is clear by your accusations that there are real differences between what you believe and what I believe. But it is not because only one of us is conservative. I am committed to being conservative in the most profound sense. If we disagree, it is not because only one of us believes in the authority of scripture or the essentiality of baptism. I and all our faculty believe in these things. We will follow the teaching of scripture wherever it leads us. We will not allow the traditions of the church, however honorable or well intended, to take weight equal to scripture. And while we will communicate clearly and boldly what we believe, we are just too conservative to assume that we should take God's role in determining who is or is not saved. In the language of Paul, God knows those who are His. It is not a liberal notion to let God take care of what He is responsible for while I take care of what He has given me responsibility for. I will work to plant and water. I will let God do the adding.

I appreciate your fervor, but in this case I believe your zeal is misdirected. Let's agree to affirm together all we believe about the Bible and the church. Let's find a way to encourage one another as much as possible. Let's assume the best of each other, assume the best of motives, assume each of us desires to do God's will and then treat each other with gentleness and respect. Let's not attack each other but, in the midst of a pagan culture, let's work to bring the world to Christ. Let's avoid the inappropriate talk, gossip, and destructive language Paul warned Timothy about. Dr. Vadney, whether or not you believe it, we are working for the same cause, worship the same God, believe in the same Christ, have been baptized by the same baptism, and are indwelt by the same Spirit. I hope we can work side by side for the things that matter. May God bless you as you give your life for His Kingdom's sake.

Jack Reese

VADNEY'S FIRST REBUTTAL TO REESE'S RESPONSE

11:15 PM 3/25/2004

Dear Dr. Reese:

Thank you for your response to my email.

Please be assured that I do accept what you call your "core beliefs," but not because they are yours, and not because I accept them as "core." As you know, the Bible has no mention of "core" beliefs. Rather, the New Testament is the core of my beliefs. The New Testament speaks not only of how one becomes a Christian. It also speaks of how one

must live as a Christian, that we must avoid even the appearance of evil. It also speaks of the New Testament Church, who is her head, how she is organized, and what are her distinctive traits. Notably you have rejected any mention of how one must live, and any mention of the church, which Jesus bought with His own blood, from your “core beliefs.” You appeal that you are a “conservative” because you believe in baptism for the forgiveness of sins. You have the privilege of portraying yourself however you choose. But I would respectfully disagree, for you have rejected much of what your conservative teachers gave you.

For instance, I understand that the following characteristics identify Christ’s blood-bought church:

1. This church worships according to the truth (John 4:20-24).
2. This church searches the Scriptures and doesn’t accept the teachings of men (Acts 17:10).
3. This church observes the Lord’s Supper every Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 11:18-30; I Cor 16:1-2).
4. This church has all baptized believers taking both the bread and the fruit of the vine (Luke 22:14-20; Mark 14:22-26).
5. This church sings psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and finds not Scripture authorization for instruments in the New Testament (Eph 5:15-21; Col 3:15-17).
6. This church has Christ as the only head and Savior (Eph 1:20-23).
7. This church believes that the Lord adds only the saved to His church (Acts 2:36-38, 47; Eph 5:23-25, 32).
8. This church obeys Christ and submits to His teachings (Acts 20:28; Col 1:18).
9. This church selects only men with Scriptural qualifications to serve as elders (Tit 1:5-9; Acts 20:17, 28-30).
10. This church selects only men to preach and lead the congregation (1 Tim 2:8-12; 1 Cor 14:34-36).
11. This church rejects the wearing of religious titles and garments (Matt 23:5-11; 20:25-28).
12. This church accepts all baptized believers into fellowship, regardless of religious, social, or ethnic background (Rom 6:17; Gal 3:26-28).

I know from reading your writings that you have rejected #5. Based on the fact that you allowed a female preacher to come into an advanced preaching class at ACU and critique the students’ sermons means that you have rejected #9 and #10. Clearly you must have a certain way to interpret Scripture to reach your decisions. You must have concluded that Scripture must be interpreted consistent with present culture. In other words, the Scripture was correct for the age in which it was written, but must be reinterpreted for the present age. Perhaps you are a conservative compared to some denominations. After all, you still say that Christ is real. However, you are certainly not a conservative within the churches of Christ. You are free to advertise yourself in whatever way you like. We all have free speech, don’t we.

You say that the ACU Lectureship is a model for how people can talk about their differences in a spirit of love and mutual trust. You say that the people who speak at the ACU Lectureship represent themselves and not the University. You mention how you also disagreed with some speakers. However, you say, “But we will continue to be a place where those diverse perspectives can be voiced in a Christian atmosphere.” Let me get this straight: ACU invites people to speak at the lectureship whom they know teach false doctrine. ACU doesn’t give any disclaimers about any speaker, and doesn’t inform the attendees that some of the speakers will be teaching things that are unsound. But if someone expresses disgust over something taught, ACU will express amazement, and say they are innocent of any wrong-doing. After all, the rules of the lectureship, man-made and unpublished, say all views can be expressed. Therefore, ACU is never in the wrong for inviting a false teacher. You are just like Teflon, for no criticism can stick. That’s really convenient for you. However, that’s really hard to swallow for me. Dr. Reese, that is not even remotely credible. For example, by your statement, your “core beliefs” indicate that you believe baptism is necessary and essential for salvation. In other words, if I understand you, you say a person cannot be saved without baptism. If so, fine. But that means that Hicks and Taylor, and Lucado, who were all prominent figures at this lectureship, don’t believe what you say is core. Hicks and Taylor say that some are saved who are not baptized. Lucado clearly teaches that one is saved before baptism. He offers the same sinner’s prayer that any good Baptist would say. That means they are teaching things that will cost some people their salvation. So have you rebuked them? Have you told anyone that their views are false? Have you told anyone who attended the Lectureship that these men are false teachers? Have you tried to correct the “misimpressions” they left with the media?

Dr. Reese, please consider the following Scripture:

2 John 1:9 through 2 John 1:11 (NIV)

9 Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. 11 Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.

Now ACU says they are Teflon, and they can invite whomever they want to speak at the lectureship, and no blame can ever be put on them for what the speaker says or represents. However, God says that anyone who welcomes a false teacher shares in his wicked work. Which view do you want to advocate? ACU's boastful man-made rules that promotes toleration for every false doctrine, or God's opinion of how we should view false teachers? It appears that you take pride in diversity.

It appears that in your delight with diverse views, and for the sake of diversity, you make no attempt to right the impressions that false doctrine creates. There is nothing in the Bible that commends these actions. The only thing that resembles it is the way the Corinthians treated the sinful man in 1 Cor 5. They were rebuked by the apostle Paul for their tolerance. Have you become too tolerant? You have made an important statement in the following:

“There were other viewpoints presented at the Lectureship that you did not refer to in your letter, presentations that did not support the thesis you are making. In fairness, you should probably mention that other presenters expressed quite different perspectives than ones you have indicated.”

Perhaps you would like to line them up for me. One column for those who represented what I reported, and the other column for those who did not represent what I reported. I want to thank you, however, for admitting that these views I reported were actually taught during the lectureship. That is the first step to change.

At your suggestion, I have forwarded this email to a large number of people. As you say, it is only fair that they read your account, and understand the unpublished ground-rules of the ACU Lectureship.

By His grace,
Vic.

REESE'S SECOND RESPONSE TO VADNEY'S FIRST REBUTTAL

From: Jack Reese [mailto:jack.reese@acu.edu]

Sent: Saturday, March 27, 2004 3:15 PM

To: The Vadneys

Cc: moneyr@acu.edu

Subject: RE: ACU's defining lectureship

Dr. Vadney, thank you for your response. I know you are a man who wants to do what is right and that you are trying to follow Jesus. I am as well. I hope you believe that. I will be prayerful for both of us that we may communicate in godly and constructive ways.

It has become clear to me since I last emailed you that you actually published your accusations on your web site as well as sending your letter by email to numerous individuals BEFORE you received any sort of response from the people you are accusing. In fact, apparently you did so before you even asked anyone here to respond. I am surprised, considering your commitments, that you would participate in a practice so clearly at odds with scripture. I know you do not consider what you have done to be gossip because you believe your actions are justified. But your actions, in fact, are not justified. Gossip can never be justified. What makes a message gossip does not depend upon whether the statements are true but rather is determined by how the statements are used, how the accused are treated, and what the purpose of the message is. In this case, and I want to be absolutely clear, your accusations are NOT true. But either way, I do not think such behavior can be defended. The Bible is replete with warnings against such things (e.g. 2 Corinthians 12:20 and 2 Timothy 2:14-16 among other passages).

Similarly, your letter has proved to be not just polarizing but divisive, as is clear from letters I and others have received as a result of your actions. I cannot imagine how this participates in the spirit of Christ or how this could be conceived as anything other than a party spirit and divisive. Gal. 5:20, among other passages, makes this clear. I know this has not been your intention, but I do believe this has been the effect of your actions.

Moreover, in my opinion you have engaged in a serious ethical breach by posting private, unpublished email addresses. This is a very great concern. This is similar to taking unlisted phone numbers and sharing them with

hundreds, in this case perhaps even thousands, of people. Because I understand how important it is for a person to live as a Christian, how important it is to avoid even the appearance of evil (as you yourself recognized in your post to me), I am asking that you take care of these matters immediately. Minimally, I believe, this would include eliminating the two private email addresses on your web site as well as publishing my responses to you there. Frankly, I think far more is called for. But what you choose to do in response to these breeches is up to you and what you believe is right before God.

Dr. Vadney, in your post to me you said, “Notably you have rejected any mention of how one must live, and any mention of the church, which Jesus bought with His own blood, from your ‘core beliefs.’” I first of all spoke of baptism and the authority of scripture in my letter to you because those were the issues you raised. If you have read things I have written, as you have indicated you have, then you are quite aware that I have also talked about the importance of living rightly and the importance of the church. (For example, see chapters 9 and 10 of *The Crux of the Matter*.)

I will respect your reticence to use the word “core.” Let me, then use terms the Bible uses. Paul spoke of those matters that are of first importance—that Jesus died, that he was buried, and that he rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). Jesus spoke of weightier matters of the law—mercy, justice and faith (Matthew 23:23). He spoke of a first commandment—loving God with your heart, soul, mind and strength—and a second commandment—loving your neighbor as yourself. These reflect what is clear throughout the Bible, that there are some things at the center that define the rest. At the heart of the message of the Old Testament is the creation and the exodus. All through the Old Testament, these acts of God provide a context by which everything else can be understood. The Ten Commandments, for example, are rooted in God’s deliverance of his people from Egypt (Exodus 20:2, Deut 5:6).

Similarly, at the center of the story of the New Testament is the coming of God-in-the-flesh in his son Jesus and his death, burial, and resurrection. To say that these are the center is not to deny any of the rest. Recognizing that justice, mercy, and faith are weightier than the tithing of mint, dill, and cummin did not negate tithing, as Jesus made clear. Rather it defined it, provided a context for understanding it. Saying that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ were of first importance did not undermine the very exhortations Paul made to the Corinthians but underscored them and gave them meaning.

To say that the cross and resurrection of Jesus are of first importance is not to negate the place of the church or discipleship. On the contrary, it is to emphasize them more; it is to see the reason for their existence. One can hardly understand the meaning of discipleship without hearing Jesus’ exhortation for us to take up our cross daily and follow him (Luke 9:23). One cannot know what it means for Christ to be the head of his church apart from his crucifixion and resurrection (Col. 1:18-20). Being a church member obviously means more than merely placing ourselves among a group of people who are organized properly; it means placing ourselves under the reign of Christ who died and rose for us. On the other hand, to *deny* that the cross is at the center of Christian doctrine and practice—or to deny that there even *is* a center of Christian doctrine and practice—seems profoundly unbiblical to me. I am frankly surprised that you seem to deny what Scripture so clearly affirms. Some things are of first importance. Some things are weightier.

To give another example, Paul does not call Peter a false teacher or condemn him to Hell even in light of Peter’s inconsistent beliefs and practice (Gal. 2:11ff) though these were obviously serious concerns to Paul. But he does say, in the same correspondence, that the person who jettisons the gospel of grace and replaces it with a system of works righteousness driven by the principle of salvation by lawkeeping is proclaiming a different gospel, which is no gospel at all, and that person is accursed (Gal 1:6-9; this is, in fact, the primary message and purpose of Galatians). Some things are more important than others.

Those things that are of first importance, those matters that are weightier, all inexorably lead to godly living. Of course I care about Christian living, I assume you do too, which is why I began this post with a strong expression of those very concerns.

Dr. Vadney, I find your comments related to Lectureship quite revealing. There is a big jump between recognizing that I disagreed with some statements made by individuals at our Lectureship and assuming that I believed any of these individuals were false teachers. It seems to me that this is getting close to the real issue between us. Do you believe that everyone who disagrees with you is teaching false doctrine? Is it possible for people to disagree with each other without one of them teaching false doctrine? Everyone on the Lectureship program was a Christian. Everyone on that program believes in the full inspiration of scripture, believes that Jesus was God in the flesh, and is committed to the church. Everyone on that program teaches and practices believer baptism. That is true for **Clyde Woods** of Freed-Hardeman. (Did you include Dr. Woods in the list of tapes you suggested people listen to?) That is true of John Mark Hicks of David Lipscomb. That is true of **Rubel Shelly**, even though I know you do not believe it. That is true of

every Lectureship speaker. No, we did not have any false teachers at the ACU Lectureship.

You made particular reference to John Mark Hicks and Greg Taylor. They strongly affirm the place and importance of baptism. I sat in their class. I have had many conversations with John Mark. They recognize that God does the work in baptism, not humans. I don't know if you agree with that or not. The working and saving part of salvation is God's responsibility and is done by his power. He does the saving. To say that, to say that it is up to God to save and not up to us to understand everything perfectly in order to be saved, is not to deny the place or importance of baptism. On the contrary, it upholds baptism as the work of God. They also argue that the purpose of baptism is not just to save us but to transform us. In other words, the baptized person ought to actually act more and more like Jesus, treating others with care and concern, serving others sacrificially and humbly. You do not have to agree with their conclusions, but it would be unfortunate indeed if you assumed that they did not believe in baptism or the working of God through the death and resurrection of his Son. They do believe this and have communicated it clearly.

Regarding Max Lucado, he was not invited to speak or teach a class at our Lectureship. He was the recipient of an award by the Alumni Association for worldwide achievements. This is what universities do in relation to prominent graduates. I might add, Dr. Vadney, while I have made it clear there are things over which Max and I disagree, some of which are quite substantial, I have always found Max to speak and act in a Christian manner, with humility and grace, for which I am grateful.

I thought one other phrase in your letter was telling. You indicated that I am "certainly not a conservative within the churches of Christ." This also reveals an apparent difference between us. My conservatism is not measured against the practices and doctrines of contemporary Churches of Christ but against scripture as my only standard and guide. I am concerned to know the circumstances behind every book, to have a clear sense of the message and meaning of every text within its historical context, and to apply scripture faithfully to my life. I do not do that flawlessly, I am sure. No one does. I do not, nor do you. But I am attempting with all my being to be responsive to the whole message of scripture which I believe is fully authoritative. Whether my conclusions agree with yours or those of other individuals in our churches is just not the standard I am shooting for. My desire is to align myself with scripture. Better said, I desire to align myself with the will of God which is revealed in scripture. I am not going to give ground on this issue. I deny utterly that I am liberal in regard to the teachings of scripture however you and others may choose to characterize me or other ACU faculty.

As an example of that commitment, you made reference in your post to 2 John 9-11 and the warnings against false teaching found there, but you did not include what the false teaching actually was in that passage. But knowing what the false teaching was is crucial to understanding what the passage actually means. I am unwilling to interpret passages beyond their original and intended meaning. It is a liberal tendency not a conservative one to make scripture mean what it could not have meant. In the context of early forms of gnosticism that were evident at the end of the first century, John warns his readers about the "deceivers who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh." (2 John 7) This passage in 2 John cannot be appropriately used to label as false teachers people you simply disagree with. It is not applicable in relation to instrumental music or the role of women in the church or a host of other issues. This passage is referring to whether a person believes Jesus Christ came in the flesh. We have to let the Bible speak for itself. That is what conservatives do. Again, I reiterate that there were no false teachers at the ACU Lectureship.

Further, you used 1 Corinthians 5 to criticize our Lectureship program. But the message of that passage is not about tolerating different viewpoints; it is about tolerating and therefore encouraging blatantly sinful behavior—in this case, a man openly having sexual relations with his stepmother. There is a considerable difference between having individuals who share a common commitment to Christ presenting their conclusions from scripture in the spirit of Christian inquiry, on one hand, and tolerating blatant sexual immorality, on the other. Again, Dr. Vadney, as a biblical conservative I am committed to applying scripture appropriately, of not trying to make scripture say what I want it to mean or what it could not have meant.

You indicated that I had a woman preacher critique sermons in a preaching class. I know of no such incident. This did not happen in any of my classes. But I have often had women as well as men critique my sermons. Women have critiqued my sermons for years. I appreciate the input of both men and women to help me be a better preacher. I would hope that would be the case for every preacher. I imagine I do have a different view of women than you, though I do not advocate women preachers or elders. And what I believe about women does not come from contemporary culture but from my commitment to scripture. I do not believe contemporary culture ever trumps scripture. I always ask, what is the problem that the text is dealing with, who are the people involved, what does the author tell them, what are the principles, and how can I faithfully apply the passage to my life. Though this is not my

primary point here, there are more than a few biblical conservatives who believe that women can take certain leadership roles not because they are conforming to culture but because they believe this is an important impulse in scripture. They do so out of the hard work of exegesis in the crucial passages. You and I may not agree with their conclusions, but that should not cause us to assume that such individuals do not believe in scripture's authority or that they are merely conforming to the values of our prevailing culture or that they are false teachers as defined by scripture.

You and I may very well arrive at different conclusions on many issues but not because I believe certain passages are no longer relevant. All of scripture is inspired and relevant. I do not believe the truth of scripture can be changed to suit the whims of contemporary culture. I know you believe that I do, but the people who actually know me, who have sat in my classes, who have heard my sermons, who have prayed with me, those people know the truth in this regard.

I do, however, recognize that culture influences us. It influences all of us. You are also influenced by culture. You have been affected by being Western, by being a child of the Enlightenment, by growing up in America, by living in the South, by reading the Bible in English rather than Greek or Hebrew or German or Thai. Your view of family, your views of women, your views of parenting, your views of church, your views of the nature and function of scripture, your views on evangelism, all of your views have been at least subtly affected by the times you live in and the influences of your culture. Mine have been too. We must always be aware of how culture influences us. Otherwise we are blind to what we bring to the text. Otherwise we assume that our view of things is always the correct one. Scripture always trumps culture. Culture does not have authority over scripture. Being aware that none of us sees things perfectly—that all of us are affected by our worldview, our upbringing, and our experiences—should not make us timid nor should it lead to compromising our convictions. But it should make us humble. Such humility is a godly characteristic.

Dr. Vadney, my commitment is to continue to be kind and loving in relation to you no matter what. I will not be involved in wrangling over words (2 Timothy 2:14) nor will I allow myself to be engaged in senseless controversies (2 Timothy 2:23). I will work to never be divisive but to seek to unite Christians in every way I can. I hope you will join me in those commitments.

Again, I am confident you will want to immediately correct the problems you created in the sending of your initial emails and the inappropriate inclusion of private addresses. This I know: whatever disagreements we may have, I recognize you as my brother in Christ. I trust you see me in that regard as well. I am not your enemy, nor is ACU. We are part the same family, God's family. May God bless you richly.

In Him,
Jack Reese

VADNEY'S REBUTTAL TO REESE'S SECOND RESPONSE

Dear Dr. Reese:

Thank you for your response to my email. You are obviously giving much time to this, and I appreciate that. However, I know you are a busy man with a family, and I regret occupying your time so much. I would not do this if I didn't have significant concerns for the church.

Dr. Reese, you call my actions divisive. I'm sorry if you think that. However, let me suggest that your lectureship was divisive. My level of concern rose dramatically because of your lectureship. Many people think that those you have trained have gone out and been very divisive. It appears that your influence and actions are exponentially greater than mine in this matter.

If I understand you correctly, your position on the concerns I have voiced is that I have misinterpreted these events, and that I am incorrect in my assessments. You have found nothing valid in what I have brought you. However, you have not yet persuaded me. I still believe that you want radical change in the churches of Christ, and that you will definitely lead to way to define the new era with new values. I'm sure there will be positive changes. However, it is concerning those issues that violate apostles' commands that I am most anxious.

I'm sorry I'm making you uncomfortable by my inclusion of the ACU Board of Trustees officers email addresses in my "Dear Friends" email and on my web page. I have refrained from publishing all the ACU Board of Trustees' physical addresses. There are several other Board members to whom I sent my email regarding the ACU Lectureship, but I have not published their email addresses. I published only two so that the Board will be informed. By the way, my list of the ACU Board of Trustees came from one of the board members. So you should not feel so much

indignation about my contacting the board, or about me making their officers names' and emails available. This information has been disseminated by others, and I am the recipient of this information through that mechanism. Dr. Reese, if a board member revealed that information, I can hardly consider that information private.

Dr. Reese, I want to tell you why I have taken this approach. I have talked to several people who have interacted with you about problem issues. I cannot find any who feel those interactions were productive. All agree that you speak well, but you are not willing to change your views or your pattern of implementation. You insist that nothing can go to the ACU Board of Trustees unless you or Dr. Money say so. So you are the gate-keepers of information. However, I simply don't want to play by those rules. Many serious problems wither and die in your office with no one else the wiser. During your tenure, the ACU Bible Faculty has been transformed from being somewhat conservative (text oriented, and exercising self-restraint), to "diverse," and then to monoculture with radically new values to agree with yours. The nature of the lectureship has definitely changed. You train your interns to be change agents. No problem, except I don't trust the agenda. I do not believe the Board of Trustees fully knows what you have done or what issues you have caused in the brotherhood. You have rewritten our understanding of restoration values regarding the church. You have massively contributed to a radical reformation in the church. I seriously doubt that you will do anything about any complaint from me unless it comes to you in a massive fashion and with many witnesses. Had your reputation been honest dialogue rather than eloquent rhetoric, my plans would have been otherwise. So I give you this challenge: Establish a real forum for exchange of concerns with proof of actions on your part. Make that forum open to not just the ICOC, but to the large segment of the churches of Christ with whom you have cut off dialogue. Openly invite those whom you have disenfranchised to honest dialogue. Then we can talk about revising my web entry concerning the ACU Lectureship.

You might wonder why I have such little faith in your response. Let me give you two examples. First, I said to you that you allowed a female preacher to come and critique the sermons in the Advanced Preaching Class. To my amazement you answered that you had no knowledge of that. Dr. Reese, you can't imagine how much that lacks credibility. Not only did she critique the sermons of these young preachers, but she also spoke in chapel. Did you miss those events altogether? Her name is **Katie Hays**, from the West Islip Church of Christ, 600 Montauk Highway, West Islip, New York, 11795. Please, allow me to refresh your memory—their web address is <http://www.wichurch.org/>. Under their WHAT'S NEW link, you will find this entry:

[Here in Vadney's email he included Hays' sermon. If anyone desires a copy of Hays' sermon you may write CFTF and request it. The cost will be \$1.00 per copy.—Editor]

If you click on the link marked LEADERS, you will see a picture of Katie Hays. You will also see the names of the "shepherds," and please note that several women are listed as being "shepherds."

By your approval of bringing this radical feminist to critique male student's sermons, and by approving of her preaching to the student body, you have affirmed her ministry, as well as the female shepherds (i.e., elders) who serve in this "Church of Christ." (If you don't think she was affirmed, then read her own description at this web page: <http://www.gal328.org/news.html>.) You have also turned your back on what the apostle Paul commands in Titus 1:5-9; 1 Tim 2:8-12; and 1 Cor 14:34-36. You showed by your actions or the lack thereof that we should regard this church of Christ as people in full fellowship with all the churches of Christ, despite the fact that they are violating apostolic commands. Now you say I can't call her a false teacher, because the women's issue is not "core." Although her ministry involves violating an apostolic command, you say that since it is not with those "core" values of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, I can't call anyone a false teacher in this matter. I can't find this in the New Testament, but I will honor your mystifying rules of engagement so that you might not be offended. So what if you say you didn't approve of her coming before hand, and that you were not in favor of it when these things occurred? Did you stand up in chapel and say that her actions were unacceptable? I give you this challenge: Forward me just one email showing your disagreement with this incident when it occurred, and perhaps there will be reason to trust what you say. Alternatively, show me how ACU disciplined the person responsible for inviting her, and make the record of this public and verifiable.

By the way, you previously mentioned that outside denominational grants do not influence chapel worship in any critical manner: "I am part of the team using the grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. Because we have received that modest grant, we chose to create ways that our chapel services would better include African-American, Hispanic, and International students as well as better connecting to students from small and rural churches. As a result, we sing more Stamps-Baxter songs and occasionally songs in Spanish. We have more men from ethnic minorities serving in leadership roles. That's it." No, that's not it—there appears to be more. Dr. Reese, let me suggest that you have possibly had more influence from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship than you are willing to admit. How else do you explain receiving a radical feminist to speak in chapel? What other agenda could explain

this action?

The second point regards your inviting the Campolos to ACU campus in January 2003. He is a liberal Baptist, and you let him speak in chapel and you were there. He gave an invitation to the student body to come and work for him for the summer, going from house to house and encouraging and praying with people in the inner city. You didn't interrupt his invitation, nor did you come immediately to the microphone and discourage it. You allowed this man to recruit ACU students for Baptist ministries. Here is a man that certainly doesn't believe in baptism for the remission of sins. And yet by your actions you affirmed his invitation. By your actions, or lack thereof, you showed that you believed Baptists are brethren, and we should have fellowship and share work with them. So what if you say you didn't approve of it before hand, and that you were not in favor of it when it occurred? I give you this challenge: Forward me just one email showing your disagreement with this incident when it occurred, and perhaps there will be reason to trust what you say. Alternatively, show me how ACU disciplined the person responsible for inviting the Campolos, and make the record of this public and verifiable.

You want to make me feel guilty for my email, and how a host of others have forwarded it on. I tried to tell the truth in what I reported, but you said of the female preacher that you didn't remember her. You allowed a liberal Baptist to recruit ACU students for his summer work. I find that extraordinary.

A word on false teachers. If someone disagrees with me on a point of opinion or methodology, I certainly do not view that person as being a false teacher. However, if they disagree with obvious teachings of the New Testament, and particularly if they are preachers doing so, then they are false. The Bible is true. He who disagrees with the Bible is false. I don't determine what is true—God does. For instance, if a preacher says that there should be women preachers or elders, then I would have to say that conflicts with the plain teaching of the New Testament, and what that preacher says is false. This is not a point of relative indecision. Not everything is in this gray zone of "I'm just not sure." You have plain teachings regarding this, yet by your practice you are turning Paul's condemnation of a practice into a permission for that practice. You say you don't believe there should be female preachers and elders. Your actions clearly speak otherwise, and powerfully so.

One last item. You said the following regarding the uniform belief of the ACU faculty regarding baptism for the remission of sins:

"Let me be absolutely clear, all ACU faculty believe in the full authority of scripture, believe in baptism by immersion for the forgiveness of sins, believe that baptism puts us into Christ, that no one is saved other than by the blood of Jesus. If a person believes anything other than this, they cannot be appointed to the faculty of this university. If any current faculty doesn't believe in these core doctrines, they would be terminated." I thank you for such a strong statement. However, your actions again carry a potentially different message than your words. Please read the following sermon by one of your faculty, Mike Cope: (Note: the underlining is mine) *[Due to the lack of space we have omitted the complete sermon. If anyone desires a copy of Cope's complete sermon, you may write to CFTF for it. The cost of the sermon is \$2.00.—Editor]*

EXCERPTS OF A SERMON DELIVERED AT FIFTH AND HIGHLAND, ABILENE, TX (APRIL 21, 1996)

First and foremost, **Billy Graham** in the fervency of his evangelical message and his integrity. **Richard Foster** and his commitment to prayer and holiness. **Tony Campolo** and his call for Christian service and resisting the worlds influence.

But the biggest problem of all to me was a man whom many of you don't know — some of you do — a man named **John Stott**. As I read more and more works by this Anglican preacher named John Stott, I was a John Stott wannabe.

Still am — in a lot of ways.

And then I got to spend three days with twenty men that included him. The closer I got the more I saw that everything I had seen from a distance was even more true up close. A man of utter holiness. A man in whom the Spirit was powerful. A man of prayer. And yet, on the other hand, a man who didn't share my understanding of baptism. Full of God's word. Full of God's Spirit. And yet ... I just didn't know what to do with it. We could earlier have called this a "**James Dobson** problem." Nearly two decades ago we had churches wanting to use James Dobson's film strips. But what do we do with James Dobson?

Well, I remember in my own city when we had **Paul Faulkner** filmstrips, we would say, "This is a video series by Christian Psychologist Paul Faulkner." So Paul that was your title, if you are here today. That was Christian Psychologist Paul Faulkner. But when we showed Dobson's videos, we introduced it as a "video series by James Dobson, Psychologist, who writes and speaks from a Christian perspective (sic)."

See the out there. No commitment. We didn't know quite what to do with this man. A man of deep holiness, and prayer,

who is trying to save our families.

Then one day it hit me. I needed to come clean on this. Because I believe these are God's people, even though they are not a part of my little bunch.

I'm talking about people in whom you see the Spirit working. And I realize that I have been misreading scripture. Scripture never tells us to draw a line of fellowship anytime there is difference. If we do that, we will be the most divided people in existence, while Jesus, in the prayer that David read [John 17], begs us to be united and to witness to the unbelieving world.

And, it hit me, unity can't come by uniformity.

In humility recognizing that we don't have all truth. In gratitude recognizing that faith in Christ alone is what brings salvation.

There's a group like that here in town that I been with some and to hear these brothers pray. There is a Baptist church on South 7th that recently sent us a note saying, they spent a Wednesday night praying for us. Where is that coming from?

My long-term dream is that Highlands be a part of leading in this. Leading in unity. I tell you, I would love to have a Sunday when Phil Christopher, the minister at First Baptist, and I exchange pulpits. Not just a chance to show that we are progressive. I'm not interested in that. Not as a chance to stick it in somebody's face so that they will be bothered. I'm not

interested in that either. But as an opportunity to express our mutual faith to other believers and to witness to unbelievers through the unity of God's people. Think of the power if Highlands leads out in calling all believes to unity in Jesus Christ.

Dr. Reese, Mike Cope clearly says he wants to exchange pulpits with a Baptist preacher to express a common faith and unity between the two groups. Now you know that the Baptists do not baptize for the remission of sins. Remember, that is a core issue for you. I agree, for Paul says there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph 4:5). Therefore, Mike Cope apparently wants to acknowledge a common faith and unity, but without the one baptism. Therefore, Mike Cope cannot consider that one Bible baptism for the remission of sins as necessary for having a common faith and unity. First, do you agree with my understanding? Second, if you do agree, have you acted in accord with your policies and procedures that you outlined in the above quote, and terminated Mike Cope? If so, note that he still remains listed in the Adjunct Faculty on your web page. Even though Mike Cope preached this sermon some years ago, he still remains listed. Did Mike Cope repent? Is that why ACU did not terminate their relationship with him? Furthermore, is this not an excellent example of an evangelical ecumenist attitude in a ACU Bible Faculty member?

Another example of someone who may be compromised in regard to your central core value of baptism for the remission of sins in **Dr. Carroll Osburn**, again one of the ACU Bible Faculty. A full quote from Osburn's book is as follows:

“There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who differ on whether more than one cup in communion is acceptable, whether the communion bread is to be pinched or snapped, whether one can eat in the church building, whether funds can be used from the church treasury to support orphan homes, whether the Lord's Supper must be taken every Sunday, or whether instrumental music is used in worship. There should be room in the Christian fellowship for those who believe that Christ is the son of God, but who differ on eschatological theories such as premillennialism, ecclesiological matters such as congregational organization, or soteriological matters such as whether baptism is 'for' or 'because of' the remission of sins.”

Please read the following review of Dr. Osburn's book, *The Peaceable Kingdom: Essays Favoring Non-Sectarian Christianity*. [This review was written by Stephen Wiggins. If anyone desires a copy of Wiggins's review, you may contact CFTF.—Editor]

Dr. Reese, it appears that Dr. Osburn is thought by some to have the wrong understanding of baptism. You know him very well. Is he still convinced that Acts 2:38 can be read as either “for the remission of sin” or “because of the remission of sins?” If so, he does not share the same understanding of baptism that you assert all members of the Bible faculty have. Since his book was reviewed in 1995, what has been the outcome of this controversy? Has ACU

decided to hold to its policy and terminate the employment of Dr. Osburn? Is the reason Dr. Osburn still at ACU because he repented?

Dr. Reese, there are a host of witnesses. Since your words don't seem to always reflect actual ACU conditions, I urge you to answer as succinctly and as truthfully as you can. Thank you. Sir, I know this is putting you in a difficult position, and I apologize for it. But the well-being of the church is potentially at stake, and these questions must be asked.

By His grace,

Vic Vadney

[Dr. Jack Reese did not respond to the last email.—Editor]

A FINAL STATEMENT FROM VADNEY TO REESE

Monday, March 29, 2004 7:48 AM

Dear Dr. Reese:

Brother, I have been thinking about our situation. I have sent to you my concerns and your approach is to deny everything. As you have done so, I have increased the amount of verifiable evidence being set before you and others. For you to continue your approach of denying all is not going to be a credible or acceptable response. I am amazed that from the first you did not acknowledge my concerns. Your manner of resolving problems has probably worked for you in the past. However, if you persist in this approach now, I am concerned about not only your future at ACU, but for others as well.

I know that you and Dr. Money and all the Bible Department are committed to this New Restoration Movement. Dr. Money announced it some years ago, clearly implying that the church has not yet been restored, and that we need to move on in our quest to restore the New Testament church. ACU has done so. However, along the way ACU has become arrogant towards its mainline heritage. While giving lip service to that heritage on the ACU web page, the institution has become imbalanced and monocultural and has done a very poor job of communicating meaningfully with the growing opposition. ACU has engaged in activities that have deeply offended those who still hold to the restoration values established long before both you and I were born. Some of those events I have communicated to you in my emails.

At this point in time you have a big problem. I will make no attempt to stop the firestorm of emails until ACU makes some fundamental changes. Please look to your conflict management expertise. Your own background and your local advisers can help you. My own suggestions are as follows:

1. Openly acknowledge what has publicly taken place. To deny verifiable public events is very unwise. For instance, there were views encouraging radical change that were presented at Lectureship. For the university to deny that these things were not said is not credible. For them to say they have no ownership or responsibility of that situation is ridiculous. To say that Tony Campolo didn't come, or that you never heard of Katie Hays isn't going to suffice. To say that alliances with denominations hasn't occurred is simply not acceptable.
2. Acknowledge that these events caused serious offense to many people. Express your regret for offending many people.
3. Put in place long-term corrective solutions that will keep you out of problems, and articulate these solutions. No, I don't mean firewalls, or having a team of people to answer the phones and the emails to deny that ACU has a problem, or to demonize someone who is presenting you credible concerns. Do something to correct the obvious imbalance in your Bible Department. Hire someone who does not agree with you. Make a place at your table for the opposition. Stop excluding us. We have an investment in ACU also. Your current strategy has alienated many families and lost support that you need. Right now your solution is to say that Vic Vadney is an evil man, a gossip, and a divisive person. Please rethink this. Brother, I am not going to back away until there are meaningful changes. You can demonize me all you want, and you can continue to say I am the problem, and ACU has no problem. You can say that I am going to be hurt by all this. Jack, those things will not make this problem go away.

By His grace,
Vic Vadney

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VADNEY SUMMURISES CORRESPONDENCE WITH REESE

After my last email to Dr. Reese, he elected to stop all further communication with me. This is my personal summary of what I asked as major concerns and what he said:

1. We should cease our elite and sectarian behavior, and ask our brethren in all denominations to forgive our sins, especially that we said they weren't saved. RESPONSE: NONE.
2. We must not say that we have the truth, but that we are on a spiritual journey, just as our brethren in the denominations are on their spiritual journey. RESPONSE: NONE.
3. We should have open fellowship with all who say they believe in Jesus. We should follow the example of brave reformists who ask denominational preachers to share pulpits with their congregations. We should also share major social and religious events with our denominational brethren. We should be ecumenical in our thinking and practice, and should openly align ourselves with the current evangelical ecumenical movement. RESPONSE: WE ARE NOT ECUMENICAL.
4. We should continue to say that baptism is important, but that it is not essential for salvation. We should recognize that there are many non-immersed believers who are saved. RESPONSE: ALL THE BIBLE FACULTY BELIEVE IN BAPTISM FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS. (HOWEVER, YOU DID NOT ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT MIKE COPE OR CARROLL OSBURN. YOU DID NOT DISCUSS HICKS' AND TAYLORS' VIEW THAT SOME ARE SAVED WITHOUT BAPTISM. YOU DID NOT DISCUSS HOW YOUR VIEWS ARE DIFFERENT FROM LUCADO.)
5. In celebration of these reform values, ACU recognized their Outstanding Alumnus, Max Lucado... RESPONSE: I SEE NO REASON NOT TO HONOR HIM.
6. ACU has formed alliances with other religious groups, and have even received grants and funds from another religious group to guide the worship in chapel at ACU. RESPONSE: IT IS TRUE THAT I ACCEPT FUNDING FROM DENOMINATIONAL GRANTS. BUT TO SAY THAT I AM INFLUENCED BY THESE IS UNTRUE. (HOWEVER, YOU DID NOT ANSWER MY QUESTIONS HOW OF CAMPOLO AND HAYS WERE FOUND SPEAKING IN CHAPEL.)
7. ACU announced their campaign to raise ten million dollars. They are in debt, and need assistance. RESPONSE: YOU ARE MISTAKEN ABOUT THE DEBT AND THE AMOUNT.
8. ACU is responsible for the views of the lectureship speakers. RESPONSE: ACU IS NOT RESPONSIBLE AS THE SPEAKERS REPRESENT THEMSELVES RATHER THAN THE UNIVERSITY. (THIS IS IN SPITE OF THE UNIVERSITY CHOOSING THE SPEAKERS, KNOWING WHAT THEY BELIEVE, KNOWING WHAT THEY WILL TALK ABOUT, AND GIVING NO PRIOR NOTICE THAT THE SPEAKERS ARE NOT SPEAKING FOR THE UNIVERSITY.)
9. ACU is thereby condoning false teachers. RESPONSE: YOU ARE ABUSING SCRIPTURE; THIS CAN ONLY BE APPLIED TO THE CONTEXT. NO ONE IS A FALSE TEACHER UNLESS THEY ARE TEACHING WRONGLY ABOUT JESUS COMING IN THE FLESH. EVERYTHING UNRELATED TO THE CRUX OF THE MATTER—I.E.

CHRIST'S DEATH BURIAL AND RESURRECTION—ARE PERIPHERAL MATTERS OF OPINION (EXAMPLE FOR THIS WAS THE WOMEN'S ISSUE). THERE WERE NO FALSE TEACHERS OR TEACHINGS AT THE LECTURESHIP.

Produce Your Cause is a free monthly e-newsletter designed to help preachers, elders, and concerned brethren understand how Satan is fighting against the word of God through destructive criticism. Subscribe today by sending an e-mail to Proveit-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. To receive free reproducible adult Bible class material send an e-mail to MtnCityReminder-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

A Petition Regarding Abilene Christian University

To the honorable members of the Board of Trustees for Abilene Christian University: Greetings. We hope this finds you in good health. We pray that the Lord will bless you and endow you with wisdom and good judgment in all things.

We approach you in respect of your positions, fully understanding the burden you bear regarding the salvation and instruction of students at Abilene Christian University (ACU). We also approach you in confidence that you will hear our petition, that you will evaluate its contents, and that you will take appropriate actions.

OUR CONCERN:

Our concern is that the present Board of Trustees of ACU have allowed or in some cases encouraged ACU to depart from the purposes and values of its founders. As stated in the 1906 charter, the composition and expectations of the Board of Directors are as follows:

...each of whom shall be a member of a congregation of the church of Christ, which takes the New Testament as its only and sufficient rule of faith, worship and practice, and rejects from its faith, worship and practice everything not required by either precept or example, and which does not introduce into the faith, worship or practice, as a part of the same or as adjuncts thereto any supplemental organization or anything else not clearly and directly authorized in the New Testament either by precept or example.

EVIDENCES FOR OUR CONCERN:

There are numerous examples of departures from the founders' charter and from the precept and example of the New Testament: ACU has changed to allow dancing and a recognized dance club. A Bible professor was shown in the Abilene Reporter News drinking wine. Instrumental music in worship has been made a non-fellowship issue by many faculty members. Students who are members of denominations have been allowed to organize religious activities on campus. The use of ACU facilities for denominational activities has been authorized by the administration. There has been the encouragement in chapel that students attend denominational worship activities. There has been the advocating and encouragement of women to take on roles in worship and ministry of the church not permitted by Scripture.

The following examples describe briefly some particularly disturbing occurrences:

1. The 2004 ACU Lectureship organizers sought speakers who taught matters contrary to Scripture. Simultaneously ACU announced their choice of the Outstanding Alumnus of the year, choosing Max Lucado for that honor, a man who has abandoned the use of the name "Church of Christ," and has abandoned the belief that baptism is necessary and essential for salvation.
2. ACU invited Katie Hays, a radical feminist who is the preacher for the West Islip "Church of Christ" in West Islip, NY, and whose church has female shepherds, to critique the ACU advanced preaching students' sermons, and to deliver a sermon at chapel.
3. ACU invited Tony Campolo, a Northern Baptist (the liberal wing of the Baptist church), to speak at ACU in Chapel, where he recruited students to work in his evangelistic ministry. Several denominations were allowed to use Moody Coliseum for an inter-denominational joint "revival" with Campolo as the evangelist. Letters were sent out to churches by "Habitat for Humanity" encouraging people to attend and stating how glorious it was going to be when "Christians" of all the denominations raised their voices in fellowship and worship.
4. At least some ACU Bible professors have a functionally different belief regarding baptism. One professor is in print advocating fellowship between those who believe that baptism is "for" the remission of sins and "because of" the remission of sins and thus equally treating as brothers and sisters in Christ, those of the various denominations who have not been scripturally immersed for the forgiveness of sins. Such teaching compromises the clear New Testament teaching that baptism is essential for salvation.
5. ACU exhibits examples of conflicts of interests with denominations, at the financial level, and at the level of preaching regarding the Gospel and the Kingdom (church).
6. ACU gives unclear and misleading teachings about the nature of the New Testament church.
7. These teachings and practices have led some ACU students to abandon sound doctrine as well as the churches of Christ, and attend denominations instead, or return home to foment rebellion and division in unsuspecting churches.

In summary of the above, the ACU Board of Trustees have thus encouraged or allowed ACU to contradict and leave the founders' clear intentions and instructions in the 1906 Charter, and have drifted away from Biblical, sound doctrine and practice.

REQUESTED ACTIONS:

1. Evaluate carefully and demand that both members of the Board of Trustees and the school administration of ACU be committed to the clear intention of the university's founding fathers that they oversee and administrate in a much more responsible manner, and that they resolve these aforementioned deficiencies.
2. If current ACU leadership is unwilling or unable to comply with this, that you will take appropriate personnel action to relieve these people of their duties.
3. Address those imbalances in the ACU Board of Trustees and the Bible Department that are currently heavily weighted toward those holding a less exclusive, vague, or unclear view of fellowship and doctrine.
4. Sever all financial interests with denominations.
5. Assure the brotherhood and demand of faculty that the Biblical pattern of conversion is and will be unapologetically taught. Such statements as, "I will not judge anyone's faith—God knows who are His," leaves the implication that baptism is optional, not necessary and essential.
6. Assure that the Biblical pattern of the New Testament church of Christ is unapologetically taught. This includes a thorough discussion of the following points:
 - a. The NT church worships according to the New Testament pattern in spirit and truth (John 4:20-24).
 - b. The NT church searches the Scriptures for sole authority in belief and practice rather than the teachings of men (Acts 17:10).
 - c. The NT church observes the Lord's Supper every Sunday (Acts 20:6, 7; 1 Cor 11:18-30; 16:1, 2).
 - d. The NT church gives both the bread and the fruit of the vine to those who participate in communion, and we practice open, not closed communion. (Luke 22:14-20; Mark 14:22-26).
 - e. The NT church worships by singing songs, hymns and spiritual songs, and without instrumental accompaniment since there is no authority for the use of instrumental music in the NT practice of the church (Eph 5:15-21; 1 Cor 14:15; Col 3:15-17).
 - f. The NT church exalts Christ as the only begotten Son of God and her only head and strives to be like him in word and deed as a living pattern for our lives (Eph 1:20-23).
 - g. The NT church teaches that the Lord adds only the saved to his church and that there are no saved outside the church (Acts 2:36-38, 47; Eph 5:23-25, 32).
 - h. The NT church selects only men to serve as shepherds (elders) who meet scriptural qualifications (Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:17, 28-30).
 - i. The NT church is committed to male church leadership and selects only men to serve as preachers in her pulpits (1 Tim 2:8-12; 1 Cor 14:34-36).
 - j. The NT church does not teach the use of special titles such as Reverend, Pastor or Father, or make provisions for special vestments to be worn by preachers, or teach that there is a division in the New Testament Church between clergy and laity (Matt 23:5-11; Matt 20: 25-28).
 - k. The NT church accepts all believers who have been immersed for the remission of sins into fellowship, regardless of religious, social or ethnic backgrounds (Rom 6:17; Gal 3:26-28).
7. Assure that all freshmen are introduced to the Biblical patterns of conversion and the New Testament church of Christ in their first semester at ACU, and assure such exposure for all transferring students as well.
8. Investigate all undergraduate Bible teachers and curricula and assure that these are committed to the restoration of New Testament Christianity according to the New Testament pattern and are doctrinally sound in the faith. This should include a questionnaire about basic beliefs of the teacher.
9. Investigate all graduate Bible teachers and curricula and assure that these are committed to the restoration of New Testament Christianity according to the New Testament pattern and are doctrinally sound. This should include a questionnaire about basic beliefs of the teacher.

Students understandably are asked to read materials written by those who are not members of the churches of Christ; however, Brethren, it is one thing to ask that people read material containing false doctrine in order to learn how to refute it. It is quite another to require readings by radical feminists and liberal theologians with no repudiation of their false teachings.

CONCLUSION:

We have love and respect for Christ, His church, ACU, and the ACU Board of Trustees. We do not hate you, and we do not hate ACU. Many of us have had several generations of our families graduate from ACU. Many of us have received great benefit from attending ACU. Many of us met our mates at ACU. We are deeply thankful for the many years of positive influence at ACU.

ACU was built with the sacrifices of common men and women who desired Biblical instruction for their children. We now beg you to regard the uncountable sacrifices of men and women whose money built and sustained ACU over nearly a century. Please do not betray their trust, or the values of the founders of ACU.

We thank you that you have allowed us to present this petition, that you will consider it, and that you will take appropriate action. We have confidence that you can, and will, do this.

We have added our signatures to this petition.

Directory of Churches...

-Alabama-

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

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

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! Andy Cates, Evangelist. (205)556-3062.

-England-

Cambridge-South Cambridge Church of Christ, Brian Chadwick, 198 Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge. Publishers of "Oracles of God". Tel: (01223) 501861, e-mail: brian.chadwick@ntlworld.com

Cambridgeshire-Ramsey Church of Christ, meeting at the Rainbow Centre, Ramsey, Huntingdon. Sun. 10, 11 a.m.; Wed. (Phone for venue and time); www.Ramsey-church-of-christ.org. Contact Keith Sisman, 001.44.1487.710552; fax:1487.813264 or Keith Sisman.net. Research Website of 1,000 years of the British Church of Christ; www.Traces-of-the-kingdom.org and www.Myth-and-Mystery.org.

-Florida-

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. Tel. 770-382-6775, www.cartersvillechurchofchrist.org. Sun. 10, 11a.m., 6 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-Village Square Church of Christ, 200 Delaronde St., Chalmette, LA 70044. Mark Lance, Evangelist, (504) 279-9438.

-Massachusetts-

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

-Michigan-

Garden City-Church of Christ, 1657 Middlebelt Rd., Garden City, MI (Suburb of Detroit), Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Dan Goddard, Evangelist. (734) 422-8660. www.garden-city-coc.org

-North Carolina-

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

-Oklahoma-

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

-Tennessee-

Memphis-Forest Hill Church of Christ, 3950 Forest Hill-Irene Rd., Memphis, TN 38125. Sun. 9:30, 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. (901) 751-2444, Barry Grider, Evangelist.

-Texas-

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 Spring Bible Institute and the SBI 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-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. Jason Rollo, Evangelist, (817) 282-3239.

Lubbock-Southside Church of Christ, 8501 Quaker Ave., Box 64430, Lubbock, TX 79464. Sun. 9:00, 9:55 a.m., 5:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m. Sunday worship aired live at 10:15 a.m. over KFYO 790 AM radio. Tommy Hicks, Evangelist. (806) 794-5008 or (806)798-1019.

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.

Roanoke-Church of Christ, Corner of Rusk and Walnut, Roanoke, TX 76262. Sun. 9:45, 10:45 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7:30 pm. (817) 491-2388.

Schertz-Church of Christ, 501 Schertz Pkwy., Schertz, TX. (210) 658-0269. Sun. 9:30a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m., take Schertz Pkwy. Exit off I-35, NE of San Antonio, Kenneth Ratcliff and Stan Crowley, Evangelists.

-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., Gerald Reynolds, Tel. (307) 635-2482.

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