

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

WHAT IS THE "FRUIT OF REPENTANCE"?

Wayne Jackson

"When John the Baptist told the Jews that they must bring forth 'fruit' worthy of repentance, what did he mean by 'fruit' (Matthew 3:8)?"

There are three things to be taken into consideration in answering this question. *First*: exactly what is "**repentance**"? *Second*: what is the significance of the expression, "**worthy of**"? *Third*: what is implied by the phrase, "**bring forth fruit**"? We will examine each of these items.

1. The Greek verb that is translated "**repent**" is *metanoeo*. Literally, it means "after thought." It suggests the idea of thinking about a deed after the commission of it. In the case of a sinful action, the idea would be a retrospection of the act, and a subsequent feeling of sorrow for having committed the sin.

That repentance involves more than mere "sorrow" for the wrong act, however, is beyond dispute. It likewise entails a resolve to **cease** the wrongful conduct, replacing it with godly living. **J.H. Thayer** commented upon the term in the following fashion. He declared that repentance is:

the change of mind of those who have begun to abhor their errors and misdeeds, and have determined to enter upon a better course of life, so that it embraces both a recognition of sin and sorrow for it and hearty amendment, the tokens and effects of which are good deeds (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1958, p. 406).

Clearly repentance entails more than mere remorse for one's past conduct. On the day of Pentecost, Peter charged the Jews in his audience to "**repent**" (Acts 2:38). By his earlier message, however, already they had been "**pricked in their heart**" (v. 37); obviously, then, "**repent**" demanded more than mere re-

gret. It required a change of life.

Later on, Paul would write that "**godly sorrow leads to repentance**" (II Corinthians 7:10). The repentance of this text, therefore, must be **reformation**, not mere grief over the act.

2. The expression "**worthy of**" (*axios*) originally had to do with objects that were of equal weight, i.e., one item "corresponded to" another in weight. The metaphorical use in the New Testament may be employed of things both good or bad. The one who spends his time and energies in proclaiming the gospel is "**worthy of**" support (Matthew 10:10; I Timothy 5:17-18), i.e., a support that is commensurate with his labor. The person who commits a capital crime (e.g., murder) is "**worthy of**" death (Acts 23:29; 25:11).

With reference to the issue at hand, the change of life that is characteristic of repentance must correspond to the gravity and nature of the offence. Otherwise, there simply is no repentance.

3. Finally, what is the actual "**fruit**" required in genuine repentance? Several factors must be taken into consideration.

First, if the sin has been against another person individually, amendment must be addressed to that person. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, it is absurd to conclude that his confession to Nathan, "**I have sinned against Jehovah**" (II Samuel 12:13), would have exhausted the scope of his repentance. Had he no responsibility to acknowledge the wrong to **Bathsheba**, his partner in adultery?

Far too many people labor under the illusion that they can make a generic confession at a church service, without ever making things right **personally** with the victims of their sin. Much less, even, is it the case

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

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

THE PARSON'S NOSE¹

Have you ever heard the term, “The Parson’s Nose”? If you know what it is, please be patient with us while we define and explain it to the rest of our readers. *First*, let us define the word “Parson.” A general definition of a parson is an ordained sectarian denominational preacher (this includes Roman Catholic priests) who possess all the authority that the particular denomination of which he is a member appropriates to their clergymen. *Second*, we see no reason to spend any time on defining the word “nose,” for the meaning of the word is as obvious as the nose on one’s face.

Some of these denominational preachers were so self-righteous, pompous and sanctimonious that they looked down on others as not measuring up to their level of holiness. They certainly did and do not grasp the meaning, or at least, are not obedient to the apostle Paul when he said that Christians were to “**condescend to men of low estate**” (Romans 12:16). Condescending they are to certain people, but that is not what Paul meant in the preceding passage. They were and are snobs in every sense of the word. Thus, they have also been described as walking around with their “noses in the air” or looking “down their noses” at others.

Recognizing the conceited attitude of such preachers and living in an agrarian society that brought them into contact with domesticated animals on a daily basis, the ordinary people of the time compared these spiritually haughty men of the cloth with the tail of the dressed chicken. And, in those days of plain, candid and frank language this particular southern appendage of a northern bound chicken became known as “The Parson’s Nose.” Thereby the people showed their feelings of contempt for these portentous characters. And, guess what? To date no one has come up with any better description of these puffed up fellows—some of whom describe themselves as Gospel preachers.

A CASE IN POINT

We have a reason for engaging in the previous less than profound study of “The Parson’s Nose”. So bear with us as we continue to develop our article. We continue by considering a sermon recently delivered in the Mid-South.²

During a Mississippi lectureship close to Memphis, Tennessee one of our younger preachers in his sermon made light of the Biblical doctrine of bringing

forth fruit worthy of repentance. We are sure he did not mean to do such a thing (at least we hope he did not mean to do it), however he did so whether he meant to do it or not.

In his sermon he observed that Peter walked on the water to Jesus. And that he was able to continue walking on the water until he took his eyes off of our Lord. Beholding the troubled sea, Peter's faith in Christ weakened and he began to sink beneath the waves. As he sank into the water, Peter cried out to Jesus, "**Lord, save me.**" At this point in his sermon this younger preacher erroneously observed that when Peter asked for the Lord's assistance, Jesus did not put his foot on Peter's head and push him beneath the waves, while at the same time telling him to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance (Matthew 14:26-33). How out of place as well as out of character for a Gospel preacher to make such a crooked mess out of a marvelous, simply stated, and beautiful narrative.

MATTHEW 14:26-33 EXAMINED

Let us examine the passage in which Peter's walking on the water is found. Please note the following points derived therefrom. (1) The account was emphasizing faith (confidence, trust) in Christ, not specifically repentance. (2) Does this younger master, who in his sermon made the aforementioned foolish statement noted in the previous paragraph, not know that the Truth of God always harmonizes with all other Truth—including "**bringing forth fruit worthy of repentance**"? (3) Furthermore, does he not know that "**bringing forth fruit worthy of repentance**" is a condition set out by God for all responsible persons to meet in order to be saved by the Gospel of Christ (Romans 1:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)? (4) Did this younger preacher not realize that by implication he was making fun of and mocking the preaching of the great forerunner of the Christ, John the Immerser? (5) If this learned younger man had taken the time, excluding any bias, to study the text, he may have realized that Peter's cry to Jesus for salvation from drowning was clear evidence to anyone who can see through a ladder that *Peter had turned from the course of action that caused his faith to waver and had turned to the Lord for help.* If Peter's action of turning to Jesus for his salvation does not evidence his "**bringing forth fruit worthy of repentance**", pray tell what does it evidence?

We do not hesitate to affirm the following proposition: "*The Scriptures teach that when Peter was sinking into the water because of his lack of faith in Christ that he brought forth fruit worthy of re-*

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pentance when he turned to the Lord and cried out, 'Lord, save me.'" We will gladly sign the affirmative. Who is it that will sign to negate the previous proposition? Surely, our learned younger preacher will not say that Peter was saved by faith only. How sad it is that this younger preacher was so fervently intent on poking some brother in the eye with a sharp stick that he actually taught a doctrine that implies that Peter was saved by faith only. His preaching certainly does not reflect the Bible knowledge, thinking and preaching that restored the Lord's church. And, it is not the kind of preaching that will keep it alive and well as the Lord defines those terms and applies them

to His church.

Maybe, if this younger sprout had restrained himself from slapping at others (of course we are sure that in his mind they were love slaps) and had taken more time studying and thinking about the text, he would not have sunk into his own self-serving sea of arrogance and vindictiveness. If anyone needs to set his heart on Jesus as the rightly divided Word of God instructs us so to do, it is this younger brother.

Furthermore, we wonder if any of his former teachers and present colleagues who heard him twist this Scriptural account to his own personal benefit, attempted to correct him in his misuse and abuse of it. Or, is it possible that they were so inwardly happy with his unloving “dig” at another brother that they could only smile at one another when this “parson nosed” preacher made his erroneous point? But, we suppose that such is too much to hope for with someone who, along with those who support such chicanery, consider themselves on a much higher and superior plain than their rude, crude and “untouchable” brethren. As we close we urge our readers not to forget “The Parson’s Nose” as well as, and especially, the snooty characters to whom it is most accurately appended.

This sad and inexcusable event reminds me of what a young woman said in a Bible class we were teaching. She was relating a discussion she had with

another person about a Bible subject. The young woman confessed that in the discussion she reached a point where she did not know what to say in answer to a question put to her by the person with whom she was having the discussion. She reported to the class that since she did not know what to say, “I just kept on talking.” And, evidently the preacher of our narrative should have zipped his lips, rather than “kept on talking”; thereby twisting the Scriptures and in so doing oppose one of God’s conditions regarding salvation.

Yes, there is a time for silence. And, it seems to us that we read an article written not long ago about a time for silence. However, we suggest that some people are silent when the Bible demands that they speak up and out. Then, there are those who speak up and out when they should shut up—especially those who are willing to twist the Scriptures to accomplish their on prejudiced ends. Shame on this younger man and may he, as well as others of his spiritual demeanor, get their noses back in joint.

ENDNOTES

1. Please see “self-righteous Sally’s” nose in the cartoon on p.19 for a good depiction of the “The Parson’s Nose.”

2. **Barry Grider** preached this sermon at the 2005 Power Lectures, Southaven, Mississippi on Tuesday, August 2 at 9:00 a.m. In a telephone call he made to **Dub McClish**, Grider confessed that he had McClish and others like him in mind when he used the illustration of Jesus pushing Peter under the water and saying what Grider had him say.

—David P. Brown, Editor

WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE? (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

that one may secretly “repent” of a sin, and subsequently, deny that the transgression ever was committed! Strange indeed is the meaning of “repentance” in such a person’s spiritual lexicon.

Second, whenever such is possible, an attempt at **restitution** should be made. There are a number of Old Testament passages that make clear this point (see Exodus 22:1ff; cf. Luke 19:8b). Though we are not bound by the specifics of Mosaic legislation, the principle is important nonetheless.

In the case of a murder, the destroyed life can never be restored, but the murderer might be able, to the best of his ability, help support the widow and/or the children of his victim. If one has stolen money, it should be repaid to the extent of his ability. If a banker has embezzled a million dollars from the financial institution for which he has worked, he might never be able to repay that entire sum, but he should attempt to do what he can. If a person declares bankruptcy, he is

morally obligated to repay his creditors (as much as is feasible).

One is not permitted to enjoy the fruit of his crime/sin. Of course it is always possible that the victim of the abuse might “forgive” the debt (Matthew 18:27), but the sinner must never take that for granted. One must never reason, “Because I cannot repair **all** my sins, I will make no attempt to remedy **any** of them.”

The conscientious Bible student is forced to conclude that any “repentance,” without the full complement of elements that define that term, is no “repentance” at all.

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<http://www.christiancourier.com/questions/fruitOfRepentance.htm>

DO YOU KNOW YOUR LEADER?

Tim Kidwell

Recently this publication, *Contending for the Faith*, has been involved in exposing some individuals who desire to make their own doctrine concerning marriage, divorce and remarriage public. Those of us who have opposed their “binding” have been accused of causing division in the church. This is not the first time the righteous have been accused of being the troublemakers (I Kings 18:17).

Back in the summer of 2003, **Stan Crowley**, who is leading the charge with new definitions and applications, stated in front of me and two other men from the Buda/Kyle, Texas congregation that what he believed on the topic of marriage, divorce and remarriage was worth splitting the church. He almost succeeded in doing just that. Two years later, summer of 2005, those who support Stan Crowley and his strange sounds are accusing those who oppose their bindings as being the ones who are causing division in the church.

Even if we were to agree with brother Crowley’s conclusions his past conduct has not been exemplary of a Christian. His divisive behavior brought reproach upon himself and the Lord’s church at Buda/Kyle. This was not a private matter. His soul will remain in jeopardy until he is willing to humble himself, repent, and ask forgiveness for his sinful behavior.

Therefore, our actions must be consistent with trying to cause him to be ashamed so that his soul might be saved. Until such time that he repents, I will continue to admonish him as a brother (II Thess. 3:14-15). I love Stan and am praying for his and the misguided souls he has influenced.

Tim Kidwell Minister/Elder
Buda/Kyle church of Christ
Buda, Texas

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

For the past five years I have suffered from a condition known as Spasmodic Dysphonia. The majority of doctors agree that it is an incurable condition that only worsens with time. But, one doctor in Los Angeles, California has been reporting cures for over thirty years. By the love and generosity of my brethren, more than enough money was contributed to a fund to make it possible for me to receive treatment from this physician. Please do not send any more money! Extra funds that have

already been collected will be used to finance a mission trip to Guyana, South America, which I will be taking in July-August.

I am not cured, but the doctor says that my prognosis for a full recovery is excellent. The time frame for recovery is unpredictable. In the meantime I must continue with the voice exercises I learned while at the clinic. However, my voice is much improved. A sample of my voice can be heard on the following website: http://home.satx.rr.com/ktownsend/Tim_Kidwell/.

May God bless each and everyone who helped to make it possible for me to continue preaching the gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His care for me via my brothers and sisters in Christ has been overwhelming and humbling.

—3650 Jack C. Hayes Trail
Buda, TX 78610

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9:00 am	Like Precious Faith & Precious Promises (1:1-4)	Lynn Parker
10:00 am	Christian Virtues (1:5-11)	Jerry Brewer
11:00 am	Misunderstood Bible Passage	Tim Kidwell
12:00 pm	Luncheon	
1:00 pm	Sure Word (1:12-21)	Dub McClish
2:00 pm	False Teachers (2:1-19)	Michael Light
3:00 pm	The Tragedy of Falling Away (2:20-22)	Jerry Brewer
3:45 pm	Questions & Answers	Panel

Sunday, October 2, 2005

9:30am	The Day of the Lord (3:1-10)	Tom Wacaster
10:30 am	Christian Conduct (3:11-14)	Lester Kamp
	Lunch Break	
5:00 pm	Ignorance vs. Knowledge (3:15-18)	Lester Kamp
6:00 pm	Lessons from the Life of Peter	Tom Wacaster

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EXAMINING ANOTHER FALSE DOCTRINE ON MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

David P. Brown

*[We originally printed the following article in our April 2004 issue of CFTF. Except for the name **Everett Chambers**, and although it was obvious we had at least another person in mind in this article, we did not print the name of the person who holds the false view on marriage, divorce and remarriage that is examined and exposed in the article. However, with the recent unhappy events at Apologetics Press, we have decided to rerun the article and name the other person we had in mind when we wrote it. That person is none other than **Dave Miller**, the Interim Executive Director of AP. If it is the case that Miller has repented of the false doctrine refuted in the following article, he has been exceedingly quite about it. Whatever the case with him, he can speak up and out and let all know: (1) if he has ever believed the doctrine as we have revealed and refuted it in this article; (2) if he believes a variation(s) of what we have examined in the article; (3) if there are any mistakes in the article regarding what he believes on this subject and he can call our attention to it as well and we will correct it; (4) if he has repented of it we will gladly publicize that fact so as many people as possible may know that he no longer believes the doctrine; (5) or, he can tell us if he continues to believe this false doctrine on MDR. Whatever the case with him regarding this matter, he can set the record straight. And, why would anyone not desire to do that? — Editor]*

We are being told by some that God will not join together a man and a woman who are authorized by the New Testament to contract a Matthew 19:6 marriage and who *intend* marriage if one or both of them have a *motive* for marriage that is less than the ideal motive set out in the New Testament. Furthermore, we are being told that even though one or both persons have professed and declared publicly in accordance with all scriptural obligatory and expedient customs and laws applicable to being married, that after the fact, admission is made that one or both lied in his or her public vows, promises and declarations pertaining to marriage, that God never joined them together in a Matthew 19:6 marriage. Thus, they may obtain a civil divorce and one or both, as the case may be, are scripturally eligible to contract a Matthew 19:6 marriage with anyone else who is scripturally qualified to marry. This article will study these matters in the light of what the Bible teaches on marriage, divorce and remarriage.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NARRATION

(1) If it is the case that the Bible teaches that a certain *motive must* be behind an eligible person's *intention* to contract a Matthew 19:6 marriage in order for the marriage to be realized;

(2) And, if it is the case that each person *intending* marriage to one another declared that *motive* in the vows and promises to each other and God before witnesses in the public marriage ceremony;

(3) And, if it is the case that according to said persons' declaration of *their intention to marry*, which intention is based upon said *motive*, that each one declared to each other and to God before witnesses in the vows and promises of said ceremony, they are, therefore, pronounced to be husband and wife.

(4) Then, as far as the witnesses to the marriage

ceremony are concerned, it is the case that God joined them in a Matthew 19:6 marriage when they were pronounced to be husband and wife.

(5) Then, it is also the case that all others must accept said two persons to be in a Matthew 19:6 God joined marriage.

(6) However, if it is the case at a later date following the marriage ceremony of said persons, said persons confessed that they lied to man and God in the marriage ceremony regarding their *motive* behind their *intention* to marry each other.

(7) It is also the case that the question arises as to whether said persons were telling the truth when they stated their vows and made their promises to each other and to God before witnesses in the marriage ceremony and were, thus, pronounced to be husband and wife; *or*, are said persons telling the truth after the fact when said persons declare they lied in their vows and so on in the marriage ceremony and thus God did not join them together according to Matthew 19:6?;

(8) It is also the case that said two persons lied at one time or the other.

(9) And, since it is the case that those who witnessed the vows and promises of said two persons made to one another and God by which said persons publicly declared their resolve to enter into a Matthew 19:6 God joined marriage;

(10) Then it is the case that the safe and scriptural ground for all others regarding said two persons is to view said two persons as being in a Matthew 19:6 marriage.

(11) To do otherwise it would be the case that other people must take the word of two proven liars that they did not mean what they said to one another and to God in the marriage ceremony;

(12) And whether or not God joined said two persons in a Matthew 19:6 God joined marriage at the time

of the marriage ceremony when they were pronounced to be husband and wife is irrelevant.

(13) In such a case it is irrelevant, because it is impossible to prove when said two persons were telling the truth;

(14) And, since we are obligated to “**prove all things**” and “**hold fast that which is good**” (I Thessalonians 5:21);

(15) And, since it is the case that there is no way to prove when said persons were telling the truth;

(16) Then, it is the case that it is better to consider said persons in a Matthew 19:6 God joined marriage and responsible to all the restrictions and liberties thereof, than to believe their second story which we *know* is given to us for the purpose of seeking to get out of a marriage relationship without the Matthew 19:9 restrictions.

(17) And, it is also the case that men can get themselves into great big messes by their sin.

(18) Then, it is also the case that the sins (especially in intimate matters such as are involved in marriage, divorce and remarriage) can be of such a nature that others cannot determine the truthfulness and veracity of those entangled in the sinful web of their own design and making.

(19) Please remember, “**...the way of the transgressor is hard**” (Proverbs 13:15).

A CASE IN POINT

(1) If it is the case prior to the marriage ceremony Everett Chambers and Jane Doe *intended* to marry with the *motive* of gaining entrance into the United States;

(2) And, if it is the case that prior to the marriage ceremony Everett and Jane *intended* to terminate their marriage before either one died;

(3) And, if it is the case that Everett and Jane lied in the marriage ceremony when they declared their *intention* to live together in marriage until death parts them;

(4) And, if it is the case following the marriage ceremony as well as Everett and Jane’s entrance into the United States that they terminated their marriage with a civil divorce;

(5) Then, it is the case following the termination of their marriage with a civil divorce as well as entering the United States that Everett and Jane are authorized to contract a Matthew 19:6 marriage with anyone else who is authorized by the New Testament to contract said marriage.

(6) It is also the case that the question arises as to *how* anyone else can determine that points 1-5 are true;

(7) And, it is also the case that others will have to take the word of one regarding the *dissolution* of a marriage when the same one admits that he has lied regarding the *formation* of a marriage.

(8) And, it is also then the case that the question arises as to how Christians are to apply I Thessalonians 5:21 to such a case whereby they can come up with a scriptural answer that would allow them to abide by Colossians 3:17 in their dealing with said matter.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING POSSIBLE SCENARIO

(1) If it is the case that one person intended marriage for life and the other person did not;

(2) And, if it is the case that the person who did not intend marriage for life lied to the prospective spouse and everyone else previous to and during the marriage ceremony;

(3) And, if it is the case that after a time the liar declared that there never was a Matthew 19:6 God-joined marriage because he/she never *intended* before the marriage ceremony to be married till death ended the marriage;

(4) And, if it is the case, if one person’s intention voids the intention of the other person;

(5) Then, it is the case that the question arises as to which person’s intention takes precedence over the other?

(6) For, it is the case if one person intended preceding the marriage ceremony to be married for life and if, preceding said ceremony, the other person did not (but lied and said that he/she did intend marriage till death ended it), one of said person’s *intentions* will take precedence over the other in canceling the contrary one out.

(7) Practically, concerning point 6, we will give the reader three guesses, with the last two guesses not counting, as to which person’s *intent* will take precedence over the other.

IS HE IN OR OUT?

Let us see how this kind of reasoning works in another contractual relationship.

1. If it is the case that Everett intends to join the army;

2. And, if it is the case that Everett must agree to three years of service in the army in order for him to join the army;

3. And, if it is the case that Everett’s intention before joining is to leave the army when he gets ready;

4. And, if it is the case that the army’s intention before Everett joins the army is that he will remain in the army for three years;

5. And, if it is the case that Everett lied when he signed the documents of his induction into the army for three years;

6. And, if it is the case that Everett’s intention takes precedence over the army’s intention;

7. Then, it is the case that Everett never was legally in they army.

8. And, it is also the case that Everett is not legally bound to serve in the army for three years.

9. And, if it is the case that after six months of service “in the army” it suits Everett to “leave the army” in which he was never legally involved;

10. Then, it is the case that, regardless of the time element stipulated in the agreement Everett made with the Army prior to entering it, the army is legally obligated to honor his intention to leave when he desires to do so because he was never legally in the army in the first place.

If the intention not to be married for life and engaging in lying in the marriage ceremony means that God will not join two persons who are authorized by the New Testament to marry in a Matthew 19:6 marriage, why would it not work the same way in joining the army for a period of time less than that stipulated in the legal agreement made with the army and then lying about it when one signed the agreement?

When two people have vowed before and to God, one another, and the witnesses to the marriage ceremony, that they are marrying one another, what are people to believe? However, some time later the two declare that before the marriage ceremony they really never intended marriage for life, so therefore, God never joined them together in a Matthew 19:6 marriage. Thus, they reason that they can obtain a civil divorce and are scripturally free to contract a Matthew 19:6 marriage.

OLD TESTAMENT ACCOUNTS

Let us take a look at some other examples. In the days when God tolerated polygamy, Jacob married Leah thinking he was marrying Rachel. Although it was after the fact, Jacob learned of and agreed to his father-in-law Laban’s terms for marriage to Rachel. According to their custom, the terms of the marriage contract stipulated that Leah must marry before Rachel. After the fact and upon being informed by Laban of the conditions for marrying Rachel, Jacob *intended* marriage for Leah. But why did he remain in the marriage to Leah? The answer: his *motive* for remaining in the marriage with Leah was so that he could marry Rachel.

In the preceding account written for our learning (Romans 15:4), we may deduce something else pertaining to marriage. Please consider the facts of the matter.

(1) Originally Jacob intended marriage to Rachel.

(2) After his marriage to Leah, Jacob learned from Laban of the custom that the older daughter must marry before the younger daughter may marry.

(3) After the fact Jacob agrees to the terms of the marriage contract.

(4) Jacob receives Rachel as his wife.

From this biblical account we learn that one proper *motive* for marriage can be to meet certain requirements in order to attain a desired end—such as enter-

ing into the U.S. Please note that while the scripture reveals Jacob’s great love for Rachel, such is not said of his disposition of heart toward Leah. *The contractual aspect of marriage is what is herein emphasized.* Thus, Jacob was as married to Leah as he was to Rachel. And, there is nothing in the scriptures that reveals that Jacob failed to perform his responsibilities as a husband to Leah.

A MODERN DAY EXAMPLE

If it is argued that such Old Testament accounts where polygamy was tolerated are not proper examples regarding the correct motives for marriage, please consider the following scenario. Surely we recognize that over the years it has happened time and again.

(1) A man and a woman commit fornication.

(2) The woman becomes pregnant out of wedlock.

(3) Because marriage is/was held in high esteem, a common option available for the couple to honorably correct such a problem (especially many years ago) is/was for the man and the woman to marry.

(4) In many such cases if there had been no pregnancy the man and the woman may have never considered marriage to one another.

(5) But, for the sake of all involved, and especially the mother and child, marriage was proposed and realized.

(6) *Question:* Did said man and woman *intend* to marry? *Answer,* Yes.

(7) Was the *motive* for their marriage necessarily their love for one another and the baby, or was it an obligation they believed they had to one another because of the pregnancy caused by their fornication with each other? *Answer:* The motive for their marriage could be their love for and duty to one another and the baby. But, it could also be *only* out of a sense of duty to one another and the baby.

(8) Thus, said two people contracted a marriage out of a sense of duty.

(9) And, in this manner Jacob’s marriage to Leah is parallel to the previous enumerated modern day matter that lead to marriage—*Jacob’s motive for marrying Leah was to be able to marry Rachel.*

(10) Will those who say because the *motive* for such a marriage in the case of the two persons who committed fornication was less than what it should be, that the marriage was not a Matthew 19:6, “God-joined” marriage?

Let us suppose that some time later the man in our preceding narrative declares that since his *motive* to marry was simply one of *duty* to the woman and child, that, therefore, God did not join him to the woman in a God-joined Matthew 19:6 marriage because his motive was one of duty and not love. Therefore, he obtains a civil divorce to make everything legal. He

then declares himself to have never been in a Matthew 19:6 marriage. Hence, he declares himself to be authorized by the New Testament to contract a marriage with anyone else who is eligible for marriage. Who believes such a view and conduct of the man in our story to be authorized by the New Testament?

Does the Bible teach that persons who are eligible for marriage and intend to be married *must* fully understand God's teaching on every aspect of marriage, divorce and remarriage before God will join them together to be husband and wife? If the answer is "yes," then how is it possible for atheists, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and the like to be in a Matthew 19:6 God joined marriage? Surely the Bible does not teach that only Christians who are correctly informed about marriage, divorce and remarriage (and many of them are not at the time of their marriage as informed as they should be) are authorized by God to contract a "God joined," Matthew 19:6 marriage. *Indeed, marriage is not a church ordinance.*

Please consider the following "true"/"false" statement.

T F All other things being scripturally equal, if a man and a woman *intend* to marry each other with any other *motive* than their love for one another, God will not join them together as husband and wife (a Matthew 19:6 marriage).

I certainly will not answer "true" to the foregoing statement in the last paragraph. The reason being that one's *motive* for entering into a scriptural marriage does not necessarily alter or nullify one's *intent* to enter into a Matthew 19:6 marriage contract that each person has legally and publicly declared themselves to be entering.

The same would be true regarding one person's wrong intention taking precedence over the right intention of the other person. When two people who are authorized to contract a Matthew 19:6 marriage publicly declare themselves by their vows to God, one another and before the witnesses at the marriage ceremony to be husband and wife, that is what they are. If one or both of the parties at a later date state they were lying at the time of the ceremony, then one or both of them as the case may be should be held suspect. Is one or were both of them lying after the fact or were one or both of them lying when the vows were taken in the marriage ceremony? *All anyone can safely do is hold him or her to the vows they made in the marriage ceremony and treat them accordingly.*

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SITUATION

- (1) Everett desires to enter the United States.
- (2) Everett knows he can only gain entrance into the United States if he is married.
- (3) Everett meets Jane and for a time courts her with the *intent* to marry her, his *motive* being to gain

entrance into the U.S.

(4) Everett intends to divorce Jane after gaining entrance into the U.S.

(5) Jane loves Everett and knows nothing of his *motive* for marrying her or his *intent* to divorce her after they have gained entrance into the U.S.

(6) In the marriage ceremony they profess to each other, God, the state and to the witnesses that they intend to marry until death parts them.

(7) Everett lies to all involved in the marriage ceremony.

(8) From the time of the marriage ceremony until the time it takes to get into the United States Everett changes his mind and decides to remain with Jane as her husband and she his wife.

(9) Are Everett and Jane in a Matthew 19:6 God-joined marriage?

(10) Did such "marriage" become a Matthew 19:6 marriage when they are declared to be married at the ceremony or when their motives change.

CONCLUSION

The only way Jane or any other human could think of and treat Everett and Jane's relationship would be that it was a marriage according to Matthew 19:6 and had been since the ceremony in the foreign country. How could it be treated otherwise? And, if Everett some years later, decided to divorce Jane on the basis of the fact that he lied in the ceremony because his *intent* was not to enter a marriage that would only end in death, should one believe him at the time of the marriage ceremony or at the later time when he declared otherwise? The only thing that would matter would be what was officially done and the vows that were publicly made before witnesses that the marriage would last till death ended it. The rest would have to be left up to God.

The preceding conclusion is based on a biblical, common sense approach. To do otherwise is to get into a mess the confusion of which makes the misunderstanding among the people following the destruction of the Tower of Babel pale into insignificance.

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Dave Miller's Position on Re-evaluation and Reaffirmation of Elders Preached By Him at the Brown Trail Church Building on the Morning of April 8, 1990

[Because of the various differing and contradictory reports about what Dave Miller believes or does not believe as the case may be regarding the re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders, we have decided for Miller to speak for himself. If he has repented of the beliefs that he taught in the following sermon, we have heard nothing about it.

*Miller may (as did the Brown Trail Church of Christ elders) try to sidestep his doctrinal error. The Brown Trail elders and their preacher **Maxie Boren** declared that they did no sin in practicing the re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders. They said they did not sin because their approach was only a method that was used to appoint elders and to make sure that those serving as elders continued to be scripturally qualified to serve in that capacity. Their conclusion, published by them some months ago, was that they made a poor choice in using that method and that they would not do it again. Their statement does not confess the fact that they committed sin and placed the authority of godly elders into the hands of a committee of preachers and the congregation. Thus, they have not repented of their error.*

Much of Miller's sermon is scriptural—but the part of it that deals with the re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders is toxic to the church of our Lord. This is the case because of what we have pointed out in the previous paragraph.

*In the following sermon it will be noted that Miller articulates well what he believed (at least at that time) on the re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders. And, again we hope that he will not follow the bad example of the Brown Trail elders in denying that they sinned in their practice of the re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders. Miller, therefore, cannot logically say that this matter falls into the area of options (choosing an aid that helps us get done the quickest and best way possible what God obligates us to do). Remember, as noted earlier, the Brown Trail elders recently said that they, their preacher Maxie Boren and Dave Miller only made an unwise choice in picking the option they used and, therefore, they would not do it again. But this is not at all what they actually did. (It is interesting to note that prior to **Dan Flournoy** coming to B.T. the elders promised him that they would not practice the re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders again, but they did). What these men did was to advocate, teach and put into practice a doctrine that undermined the authority that God only places into the hands of scripturally qualified elders. This false doctrine does not simply provide a method whereby members of the church can propose the names of men whom they consider to be scripturally qualified to serve as elders of the church. It allows for any decision made by the elders (no matter how scriptural) to be challenged by the congregation if they do not like the decision the elders made. In such a situation the elders do not have the final "say-so" in optional matters. However, the Bible says they do (Hebrews 13:7, 17). Thus, as Miller well knows, "any doctrine that implies a false doctrine is itself false." Miller's doctrine on re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders implies that the church does not have to submit to the scriptural decisions made by scripturally qualified elders doing the scriptural work of elders. Therefore, Miller's doctrine, as he so well sets it out in the following sermon, is error. And to practice it as he and the Brown Trail elders along with Maxie Boren did, is to commit sin (1 John 3:4). Thus, what they did was not simply to chose and engage in an unwise method, but they embraced, advocated and practiced a false doctrine the design and impact of which on the Lord's church, if practiced consistently by the churches, will turn the church into a democracy and not a monarchy. Thus, this key element in the divine organization of the church would be destroyed.*

*Let all clearly understand that whether others can see this error or not, we can see it, and we will not be quite about it or be silenced concerning naming and exposing those who advocate and practice it. Those who have taught and practiced the doctrine as set out by Miller in his sermon ought to repent, confess their sins, and ask the church to pray for them—this includes Dave Miller, **Frank Chesser**, Apologetics Press, et al. notwithstanding. This is the way that is right and cannot be wrong because it is exactly what the Bible teaches concerning brethren being forgiven of their sins. Indeed, this is "piloting the strait" with only the Lord's authoritative word as our infallible compass and chart to guide us over the tempestuous seas of life to our eternal haven of rest (Colossians 3:17; John 12:48).-Editor]*

A statement was made by our elders several months ago concerning their determination to give this congregation an opportunity to make adjustments in the leadership of this church in the future. Their discussion of this matter have persisted over the last few months. Plans were made several weeks ago more concretely and they asked me to present them with some information that would assist them in carrying out this objective. They then appointed a committee composed of the preacher of this congregation, that is **Johnnie Ramsey, Don Simpson, Gary Fallis** and myself. **Maxie Boren** has an opportunity to have input on this committee, but is out of touch and out of town so much that his participation will probably be rather minimal. And so in formulating this committee, as well as a number of guidelines that were discussed by the committee, we submitted to the eldership for their approval. **A system has been set in place by which current elders might be evaluated and additional elders might be added to the body of elders**

(Bolded—Editor).

It is my task this morning to introduce you to this program as well as to address a particular Biblical matter that in my opinion needs to be addressed. Let's begin by asking ourselves this question: Since we are people of the book, and we believe that whatever we do in religion and life must be authorized and guided by the Word of God—what does the Bible say about the selection of elders. We are aware of the fact that in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and Acts chapter 20 and 1 Peter chapter 5 and other passages describe to us a function within the church, the body of Christ, known as elders, or shepherds or bishops or pastors, that this is to be a plurality, a group of men, never do we find in the New Testament one bishop, one shepherd, one elder, ruling over a congregation, but there is always two or more, a plurality, and that is very clearly taught in the scriptures. But how are these men to be appointed? We find the list of qualifications that they must meet in order to operate in this function in

this capacity. But by what means, by what process, by what procedure are they to be selected and placed into that function? The Bible is largely silent on this matter. However, the Bible has a great deal more to say about that matter than most perhaps members of the church realize. And while the details, the specifics of such a procedure are not spelled out, some fundamental principles and guidelines are. And it is to those that I would like to direct you attention.

Let's begin in first, rather in Titus chapter 1, the first chapter of Titus where we find perhaps the most explicit illusion to the selection of elders. Contextually Titus is a young evangelist, who among other things has been working among churches of Christ which were situated on the island of Crete. And as part of his responsibilities in preaching and teaching amid those churches was Paul's statement in Titus chapter 1:5, did I say verse six, verse 5. Paul says to Titus,

my own son after the common faith, grace mercy and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior, for this cause I left thee in Crete. That thou should set in order the things that are wanting and ordain elders in every city as I had appointed thee.

Now, if that is all that we had in the New Testament concerning the appointing and selection of elders, we might get the idea that an inspired apostle was authorizing an evangelist, a preacher to go into local congregations to look over the situation and make personal judgments about who should serve as elders and therefore we would have Titus going in and saying O.K., Bro. Jones, Bro. McGilicutt and Bro. Smith, you're going to the elders of this congregation. There are members of the churches of Christ who have so interpreted this passage and thus have given rise to the doctrine of evangelistic authority. Most prominent among our black brethren, and they actually teach and practice the idea that the preacher is not under the elders. That he in fact, if anything presides over the elders, and is to make judgments concerning their selection. I do not find this to be the teaching of this passage or any other passage. Turn with me now to Acts chapter 6, and we'll look at evidence that indeed proves that point. The context of Acts chapter 6 is the selection of some of the leaders within a local church. Granted this is not a context in which elders are being selected, but again if we are people of the book, if we are going to be guided by New Testament principles, we must go to those passages that give us any sort of insight on a selection process, by which functions and capacities within the church might be fulfilled. And this is really the only passage in all of the Bible that gives us that information. Contextually, the church of Christ is located in the city of Jerusalem. Populating that congregation are Jews and Jews only. There have been no Gentile converts added to the church at this point in time. But within this group of Jewish Christians is a culturally diverse situation. That is, you have Jews, who are Aramaic, who are Hebrew Jews and their background is Hebrew—they speak Hebrew or Aramaic—a Semitic dialect. But there are some other Jews in this congregation who did not grow up under that sort of a Hebrew background, but rather grew up in the Roman Empire and in

particular areas that were heavenly Greecanized. They are what's known in history as Hellenistic Jews—they have been cultured, inculturated in a Greek setting. They don't even speak Hebrew, in many cases. They speak Greek. But both groups have a strongly Old Testament background. Now here are these two culturally different groups of people, even though we would see them the same, they are Jews, and they are not getting along with each other. And they begin fussing toward one another because some of the specific responsibilities that need to be taken care of in the church were being neglected—specifically the widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food and other needs, for these older women, members of the church. The apostles, this is a young church that hasn't had a chance to appoint elders yet, and so the apostles which established the church in Acts chapter 2 in this location are concerned about these disturbances that are arising. They need to give themselves continually and consistently and persistently to the preaching of the word, to prayer, to advancing the church in terms of causing the church to grow in spreading the Gospel around the Empire and so it seems to me that what we have here is the very beginnings of what would ultimately be set completely in order with the writings of such letters as Timothy and Titus, although keep in mind that the contents of Timothy and Titus though they appear in written form, laid down in the first century that information was available and operative to Christians wherever inspired men spoke. But it seems to me that what we have here is essentially the designation of what we refer to as deacons. In fact the term, a form of the term deacon occurs three times in these verses. But rather than argue whether that is who is being appointed, let's simply note that here is an inspired selection process given by the inspired apostles. And what is that process? Verse 3, "Brethren (that is you members of the church at Jerusalem), you are to look out from among yourselves seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom." Now isn't that clear? It is the people who do the looking out from among themselves. But they are to not simply look among themselves and say "Well, I like brother So and So, he's a really good fellow, I think he's a nice man." No, you are to look out from among yourselves men who fit certain qualifications. In this case, we are given three qualifications for this group of men and as said 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and other passages give us a host of other qualifications but there are the two fundamental Biblical New Testament guidelines for making selection of capacities within the church of Christ. The people are to look out from among themselves and they are to make those selections based upon inspired instructions. Now if that be the case brethren, the implications are enormous. If indeed this is intended to be the prototype—if this is intended to be the New Testament authority which we have for making selection of officials within the church when it would be wrong for the preacher to make those selections and it also follows that it would be inappropriate for officials to make those selections. Where the eldership becomes sort of a self-perpetuating board and they add to their number men who they think ought to be added. This passage clearly teaches

that it is the congregation, the members, who are to be involved in this process. Someone says then that you are saying then that elders and leaders are to be selected are to be selected by majority vote. Well, that is not exactly what I am saying, but I am saying that this passage very clearly teaches that the membership at large is to make that decision. I don't think it means though that the church is a democracy, no, because God has already stated the guidelines, the qualifications upon which men can be selected. The fact that he expects members of the church to study the Word of God to know these qualifications, and then to also know the men whom they are selecting, and you have to do both, you've got to know what the Bible teaches as a qualified elder, and you've got to know men well enough to know whether they fit that. It seems to me that does not make it majority vote so to speak. It is not a popularity contest, someone has said—and I agree with that completely, it is not. We should not select men based upon whom we really like and whom we think are popular with other people. We had better do it based on what the New Testament teaches is a qualified man. Now, by the way, do you see the term that is translated “**appoint**” in the King James Version in Acts 6:3. Here the apostles is saying, “You look out from among yourselves men who meet these qualifications.” Once you have done that, we will appoint them. Now notice that. The apostles don't do the selection, the membership does. But the apostles then formally appoint—or install them. Do you know that the word translated “appoint” in verse 3 is the same word that is translated in Acts in Titus chapter 1 verse 5 “**ordain**.” Now think about that. By the way the American Standard came long and translated Titus 1:5 “**appoint**.” Doing a couple of things—they recognized that it is the same word that occurs here in Acts 6:3. Number 2, they were trying to soften the King James translators selection of the term ordain which sure enough made it sound like the evangelist made the decision. But we see the same word used in Acts 6:3 where the apostles did not make the decision, they just formally installed them into office. But the members selected them and I suggest to you that is how Titus 1:5 ought to be interpreted not vice versa. Paul was telling Titus to go among the Grecian churches and formally install or appoint men whom the membership has looked out from among them. That is the only way to make those two passages harmonize. I would also point out to you that in Acts chapter 14, verse 23, a different term for appoint is used. It is a very different Greek term, where we are told that a couple of the apostles went around and ordained elders in every city. But again there is no need for us to assume that they went in and made those selections, although, I for one would not question an inspired apostle's ability to select qualified men. But you see that same term used in Acts chapter 14 verse 23 is used over in 2 Corinthians 8 verse 19, to describe what the membership did in selecting one individual to carry a contribution. So what I am suggesting to you brethren, based upon these passages, is members of the church of the local congregation, are to look ye out—that they are to consult among themselves and reach an agreement concerning who is qualified to be an elder, and whom they perceive to be a leader, and then

those men are to be formally appointed or installed into that function. Titus merely inaugurated the selection process in each Cretin city, in each congregation as the member looked out from among themselves on the basis of these qualifications that Paul had given to Titus and then appointments were formally confirmed by Titus. If we follow that process, we can be assured as Paul told the Ephesians elders in Acts 20, the Holy Spirit has made those overseers. But only if we follow the instructions of the Holy Spirit as given in Scripture.

REEVALUATING AND RECONFIRMING CURRENT ELDERS

We, that certainly seems to cover the question of how elders ought to be selected, but what about this idea of reevaluating current elders or reconfirming—and there are some brethren that are really up in arms it seems to me and say that is what the liberals are doing. Well, they may be, but I am unconcerned about that in terms of whether or not it is right or wrong—but I am concerned about what the Bible teaches. Notice #1, that if the members select elders to begin with based on Acts 6:3, and since the complexion of a congregation in terms of its membership can change over a period of time, over a period of years, an eldership may conceivably no longer consist of the same individuals that the membership would look out from among themselves and appoint. So you see the implication is, it is false to say once an elder, always an elder That is as false as to say once saved always saved, that doesn't follow. Not only may a man no longer meet the qualifications, but conceivably a man could meet the qualifications, brethren, and yet not be perceived by that flock as a shepherd. Not be a man to whom they will submit themselves. Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow. So a man could be technically qualified to be an elder, and yet if the membership where he attends does not perceive him a leader in whom they respect and trust, he cannot shepherd effectively. How unwise for me as a preacher to say that I am qualified to be a preacher now you've got to keep me. When 20 or 30% of the congregation thinks I am a dummy preacher. I promise you I'd leave. I wouldn't lock my feet into the dirt and say “Well, I'm qualified so they'd better accept me. What an attitude! That attitude alone disqualifies a man. What follows then that one of the qualifications of a shepherd is that the membership perceives him to be such, and is willing to submit and to follow to respect and to trust.

Now there is one other passage that I think we need to have our attention called to and that's in 1 Timothy chapter 5. In addition then to Acts chapter 6 verse 3 concerning the selection of elders, we have this statement in 1 Timothy chapter 5, and I don't think I've ever seen it followed in any church with which I've ever been affiliated. Here we have a context beginning in verse 17 where elders are already in position in the local church, they are local bishops. He talks about how they are to be even paid, especially those who are not only shepherding the congregation spiritually but also conducting themselves as evangelists, as preachers. He says those individual are worthy of double honor, which is a euphe-

mism in the New Testament, for receiving remuneration. But he also says, and by the way verse 18 is an interesting passage, hardly a point that we ought to stop and make, but there are two illusions, verse 18 to previous scriptures. The illusion of the ox treading out the corn is from Deuteronomy 25, which was a principle even under the Old Law about how you ought to treat your animals. But notice the scripture—notice this—verse 18, for the scripture sayeth and we quote two scriptures—one from Deuteronomy 25 and the next one **“the laborer is worthy of his reward.”** I’ve not been able to find that in the Old Testament. But it is Luke 10:17 a statement that Jesus made. Here we find a New Testament epistle referring back to another New Testament epistle as scripture, well that’s an interesting side point, that has implications for our understanding of scripture. Notice verses 19 and 20, **“against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses, them** (meaning contextually here the elders) **that sin rebuke before all that others also may fear.”** The principle here is that even though a man is in a position of being an elder in the church, he can disqualify himself, or make mistakes that he shouldn’t make. It therefore follows, that a man can be removed from the office of an elder. In fact, there we have the process of doing so, there has to be also two or three witnesses, a principle well grounded in the Old Testament, in God’s approach to human relationships, but theoretically if charges could be sustained against an elder being disqualified, he could be removed. That’s all we’re talking about. We may use the term evaluation of elders, we may use the term reconfirmation, if those terms concern you, then call it something else, but the principle is that if the membership finds fault with an elder, the membership who put the elder in the first place, can remove them. And certainly all that ought to be based upon scriptural, teaching that is the man ought to be found to be faulty scripturally—and spiritually, but I would still maintain that a man could theoretically be qualified and yet have lost his standing with enough of the members that he ought to voluntarily remove himself. Now how do you determine that unless you ask the members, how they perceive that man, as an elder of the church. No one should be threatened by the prospect of being evaluated, not a one of us, the preacher shouldn’t be, the School of Preaching instructors, the elders, the deacons and all of us as members, ought to have in our mindset, in our attitude, an evaluation mentality, because my friends the Lord is going to evaluate us one day—and it may be sooner than we think. And our attitude ought to be that we want to serve the Lord, and serve the flock, and continue to have the approval and respect of the flock, of one another. And if I, or anyone else in a leadership sort of capacity, no longer sustains the respect from a sizeable portion of the flock, for whatever reason, the proper attitude would be to remove oneself from that position. A position that depends upon credibility, depends upon it! And by the way, Johnny recently told me a Christian doesn’t have to be elder to go to heaven. You know, this is a very sticky situation, and in previous congregations where I’ve been, this thing has been done. It’s not easy. It can be very unpleasant,

very difficult because we are dealing in area of ego, emotions, feelings. And therefore it’s going to require every single one of us being gentle, and kind and loving; firm, yes, truthful, yes, scripturally, absolutely. But all of us must be very careful that we are able to see things clearly through the eyeglasses of scripture, and not through personal feelings, concerns, emotions. There’s not a person in this auditorium, that I know personally, that I do not think the world of and appreciate as a member of the Church, but that doesn’t mean that I think everyone in here should be an elder. If I do not think you should be an elder of church, does that mean I don’t love you and think the world of you as a Christian and as a human being. Of course not! I don’t think I should be an elder. I don’t think I’m scripturally qualified to be. And if I find out that you agree with that assessment, should I somehow think that you don’t like me like you should? Of course not! This is such serious business that we allow, we must not allow our personal egos and emotions to enter in. We must not! We dare not! There’s too much at stake here in light of eternity.

THE PROCESS SET OUT

Very quickly, here is the process outlined and this procedure has been written out in steps and you are certainly welcome to take a look at this. We can post it in the secretary’s office for anyone that has any questions. Beginning next Sunday morning, Johnny will be presenting two sermons, one next Sunday morning and one the following Sunday morning—so that’s April 15 and 22 on the qualifications and responsibilities of elders and I know that he will do a good job. That’s a short time to cover a lot of ground, that he’s a Master at capsulating and summarizing what the Bible says. I urge you to be present for those lessons and to listen carefully. Then on April 22nd, the 2nd Sunday of these Sermons, forms will be distributed to the membership. There will be two types of forms. One of these forms will give you an opportunity to simply state whether or not you think any of the five men who are now serving in the eldership should or should not continue to serve. You won’t be asked to sign that form, in fact our five current elders have made that point, that this is strictly your opportunity without any pressure from anywhere or anyone to state your feelings about the current eldership in light of what the Bible teaches. The second form will be a form that is designed to identify the scriptural responsibilities, or specific qualifications of elders. You will be asked to fill out one form for each man whose name you wish to submit as a potential elder for the church here. You have one week to turn in all of those forms and we’re encouraging every member to do that, not like one form per couple, but each individual member, of responsible age, who wishes to do so. No one is required to do this. It may well be that your affiliation with the church and with these men is such that you feel that you do not really know about them and what’s going on. You do not need to feel compelled to comment. Once those forms are turned in, which will be by April 29, the committee of preachers, whom the elders have asked to monitor this process, will sit

down and go through these. And I want to stress to you that in light of Acts 6:3 and everything else that we've said, these preachers are not going to be making these decision for you. But they are some fundamental guidelines that will be followed. Present elders would need to receive sizeable percentage of support from this congregation. As I suggested to you that as a preacher, if we polled the congregation and found out that 25% of the church think I stink as a preacher and wishes that I would leave—I would probably leave. Because for me to work effectively with you, you have got to want me to be here. And so that only follows. And then of course the other forms there would need to be again a sizeable percentage of people who turn in say one man's name, the submission of one's man name would surely show up several times among this membership. If that individual is indeed perceived to be eldership material. So that process in and of itself will weed some individuals out. And then of course, it would be the responsibility of the committee to interview and to speak with and talk with those individuals who are being considered to be elders in the future. And so our committee interviews will sit down with these men, there's nothing secretive about this, or nothing ominous, we'll sit down with the Bible and with that man and discuss his spiritual condition in light of those qualifications. Ultimately out of that process then will come names who will be presented to the congregation on May 13th, is the way that's set up at this time. And on that date then when those names are presented to the congregation, a two week period will be allowed for the submission of scriptural objection to the committee which will be held in strictest confidence by that committee. We see no reason to render strife among members, problems that one member may have with another member, we want to try to handle this tastefully and in a Christian way and yet to face squarely the issues that are raised by any potential objections that may come in. Then, **theoretically**, once those can be sorted out, on May 27th, the last Sunday of the month of May, we will be able to formally appoint, ordain those men who will serve as elders of this congregation. **Now that may or may not include the five present ones. That's up to you.** That may, or may not include, additional ones. That's up to you. Let me stress however, brethren, that between now and then, you have some serious responsibilities; and quite frankly some heavy burdens. May you not take this lightly. This isn't like running down and voting for **Clayton Williams**. This is serious! You know he or someone else may mess up Texas but God forbid that we mess up the church. This has eternal consequences. And I have always been convinced ever since I studied the subject of elders, that it would be terrible for a person to just sit down and in five minutes say, "Well, I think brother So and So is a good fellow and write his name down and turn it in. I think that is terrible! What we ought to do is take 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and sit down and study for, I would be so bold as to say hours, applying that teaching to the individual that I am thinking about, and making certain that I can honestly say Yes. But we tend to pull out one or two things and say that he really does that

well, so that's it! And he may fit 90% of these tremendously and yet be glaring deficient in another or two. We've got to stand before God and face these spiritual decisions with all of their consequences. And I'll tell you another thing we'd better do, rather than thinking this all depends on us (and that's what we do, we think this all depends on us): We'd better do an awful lot of praying between now and then. I mean we'd better pray, pray, pray that God's will be done in this undertaking—Not our will, not our desires, not our perceptions, but I think it ought to be that—we'd better pray, deeply and fervently that God's will will be done. We need to be sober, serious, objective,— and that's hard to do, isn't it. Because we're dealing with people that we love. But we've got to be objective, and honestly allow scripture to mold our perceptions of each individual that we might consider, not our past experiences necessarily, unless those specifically are germane to what the Bible says. Can we honestly and genuinely say scripture is what formulates our perceptions with an individual. That's what we've got to do and that means we need to listen closely to the two sermons that Johnny preaches, we need to do study on our own if we have not done that in recent months or years on what the Bible says and we've got to be honest in facing up to the teaching of those passages.

If you are in our audience this morning, especially if you're a visitor, we in some sense want to apologize for not having a more evangelist message that is designed to bring you into confrontation of your own spiritual condition. On the other hand brethren, our children, and we ourselves need this kind of fundamental plain talk about how the church is functioning among us. We are not to shy away from that. We ought to rejoice that as a body of God's people we are privileged to take the Word of God and to honestly face ourselves as we said in the beginning, we will do that just as soon as the Lord returns. He wants us to do it now, and to make prayerful, careful decisions. But if you are in our audience this morning and you need to respond to the Gospel invitation to become a Christian, we would love to take a few moments and discuss that with you. If you'll come forward and make your desire known, we'll take that time to do that. If you are a member of the Lord's church and you need at this time in this assembly to come forward and publicly acknowledge sin in your life. Here is a group of people, whom I have found in the two or so years that I've been here to be people who relish the opportunity to express love and concern and appreciation for one another, as together we try to alter the blunders that we've made and grow closer to God in His will. And so what a place to rededicate one's life to the Lord, to make confession of wrong. There is no other place on the face of the earth that would be a better environment for doing that. Not the counselors couch, but before other Christians, the body that is striving to work together. Do you need to come. If you do, please do that as we stand and sing.

—230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117

Correspondence Between Beall and Thompson

[The first letter to follow this introduction was the general letter sent out on Apologetics Press stationary by Bert Thompson in which he glowing announced the employment of Dave Miller by AP. It initiated the exchange of letters between Ralph Beall (Former Brown Trail member) and Bert Thompson that appear after Thompson's initial letter. Beall's letters are a general example of what some faithful brethren did in their attempts to get Thompson to understand the beliefs and conduct of Miller while the preacher and then the Director of the Brown Trail School of Preaching, a work of the Brown Trail Church of Christ, Bedford, Texas.

Thompson's responses to Beall's letters are tame in contrast to what he wrote to some other brethren who attempted to reason with him when they offered him evidence concerning the beliefs of Dave Miller; which beliefs are noted elsewhere in this issue of CFTF. Among other things Beall's letters make it clear that long before 2002 brethren were standing in opposition to Miller's views already dealt with in this issue of CFTF.

Also, in view of the recent AP mess it is interesting to note the following quote from the former Director of AP. The quote is from Thompson's June 10, 2002 letter to Beall. Thompson wrote to Beall saying:

"I think you know me well enough to know that I never would even think about bringing someone into this work who was unsound, unethical, or whose presence would bring disrepute upon my life's work. I have closely nurtured and guarded this work-as if it were my own child-for twenty five years and I am not about to stop now." WHO CAN YOU TRUST? ANSWER: THE LORD AND HIS WORD -Editor]

May 15, 2002
Ralph Beall
113 Lynn Dr.
Hurst, TX 76053

Dear Ralph:

If you aren't sitting down as you start reading this letter, by all means, please be seated. I'm writing to explain something to you that not only is terribly exciting, but that also is going to impact our work for years to come in an extremely important visible fashion. I wanted those people who support our work to be the very first to know.

I have pulled off a major "coup"—I've just hired Dr. Dave Miller to join us in our work at Apologetics Press!

It is quite likely that Dave needs no introduction to you because he is widely known throughout the churches of Christ for both his scholarship and his unwavering—yet-balanced stand for the Truth. Dave holds earned M.A., M.Th., M.A.R., and Ph.D. degrees from accredited universities, and has served for the past decade as the Director of the Brown Trail school of Preaching in Bedford, Texas (near Fort Worth). In addition, he also is a much-sought-after speaker, and the author of the highly acclaimed book, *Piloting the Strait*, which addresses the "change agent" movement that has been troubling the church nationwide for the past several years.

Several months ago, I opened deliberations with Dave to see if he might have an interest in joining our staff here at Apologetics Press. A man of the caliber and reputation of Dave Miller does not come along very often. I knew from past conversations with Dave that he was kindly interested in becoming a part of it. Eventually, after several months of negotiations, we now have in place the mechanism that will allow Dave to begin working with us. He is due to start August 1.

With Dave's arrival, we are going to be able to do something that has long been a dream of mine for the work of Apologetics Press. We are going to begin "departmentalizing" our efforts. As you know, **Kyle Butt**, who holds B.A. and M.A. degrees in Religion from Freed Hardeman University, is our Director of Biblical Research. **Eric Lyons**, the University of Tennessee Medical School, is our Director of Scientific Information. Now that Dave is coming on board, it is our plan to add departments under the auspices of each of the directors.

Dave will be the first department head, and will serve as the chairman of our newly established Department of New Testa-

ment Studies. In the not-too-distant future, we hope to bring on board other men of the same biblical soundness, academic standing, and innate ability as Dave to serve as chairman of additional departments (Old Testament studies, biblical languages, archaeology, physics, biochemistry, etc.)

I suspect that you have noticed—as a result of reading their articles in *Reason & Revelation*—that for some time now we have been in the process of training several extremely talented young men whom we have in mind to fill some of those positions. Truth be told, we have carefully chosen our summer interns (both in the past and for this coming summer) specifically for that purpose. For example, **Alden Bass**, who has been an intern with us for the past three years and who currently is enrolled at Yale University, hopes to join us after completing graduate training in archaeology. **Joe Deweese**, who also has been with us for the past several years and who currently is enrolled at Freed-Hardeman University, will be working toward graduate degrees in biochemistry. **Branyon May**, who is joining us next month as a new intern, is a physics major at San Angelo State University in Texas (one of the top physics programs in the state, by the way!). We are working with Branyon in the hope that, after his graduate training in physics, he, too, can join us. Another new summer intern, **Zach Smith** (also from Freed-Hardeman University), is a Bible major with a keen interest in biblical languages—a talent we certainly would like to put to use in the future.

I have stated repeatedly in my past letters to you that it never has been our policy at Apologetics Press to "rest on our laurels." We constantly are searching for talented, dedicated men who would be an asset to our work, and who could provide above-average benefits to the brotherhood by joining us in our efforts. Dave Miller definitely is such a man. And so are these interns.

I hope you can tell from the tone of this letter that I am excited, not only about Dave joining us, but also about the future of Apologetics Press. There are times when I wish you could spend a day (or a week!) with us here at our offices. I have the best staff that anyone could ever hope to assemble. Kyle, Eric, and Brad are gems in their own right. They are dedicated, disciplined, and determined. But they are not alone. **Charles McCown**, our Production Manager is responsible for making our publications (and Web sites) look so professional—and he does a brilliant job. **Jim Estabrook**, our General Manager, is my right-hand man. He is truly a "jack of all trades"—and one that I could not do

without. **Sam Estabrook** (Jim's younger brother) is our Manager of Information Systems, and takes care of all of our in-house computer and typesetting systems (no small task!). Our three diligent secretaries, **Glenda Bailey**, **LaRose Willis**, and **Pam Lowery**, work day in and day out with nary a compliant (of course, as I'm sure you know, it goes without saying that they secretly run the place!).

It is your prayers and support that have made all of this possible. I hope you will continue both. In 2004, we will celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary (as hard as that is to believe). I still hold to the belief, however, as the old adage suggests, that "the best is yet to be." Stay tuned. More exciting news to follow....

Serving, with you, the living God,
[signed]
Bert

113 Lynn Drive
Hurst, Texas 76053
June 2, 2002

Bert Thompson, Executive Director
Apologetics Press, Inc.
230 Landmark Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117-2752

Dear Brother Thompson,

It is with sadness and regret that I feel constrained to write this letter in response to your letter of May 15, 2002 telling of your employment of Brother Dave Miller. I was a member at the Brown Trail congregation when Bro. Miller came there to preach. Having been in his classes, listened to his sermons, read his articles, and his book, *PILOTING THE STRAIT*; I was, and am, impressed with his considerable Bible knowledge and preaching and teaching abilities.

First, I would like to call your attention to a Sermon Bro. Miller delivered concerning the "re-confirming" of elders (by vote of the congregation) at the Brown Trail congregation in 1990, using 1 Timothy 5:19. This sermon was preached some few months after the resignation and departure of two elders and their wives, Brothers **Eddie Whitten** and **Ed Clark**, along with several others about December 10, 1989. My wife and I left a few days later. Before leaving I met with the remaining elders. Bro. **McClish** delivered a sermon on this subject, referencing Bro. Miller's sermon therein, at the Twenty-Second Bellview Lectures on June 7-11, 1997, Pensacola, Florida. The written lecture begins on page 83 of the lectureship book entitled *LEADERSHIP*, **Michael Hatcher**, Editor and Lectureship Director for the Bellview Church of Christ. A tape of Bro. Miller's sermon, above referenced, is available to some of our brethren at the Northeast congregation, copy of which can be furnished on request.

My wife and I came to the Brown Trail congregation in June of 1984 from the University Hills congregation in Austin, Texas where **Frank Dunn**, now deceased, was the local preacher under a sound eldership. It soon became evident that there was some division in the Brown Trail Eldership along "liberal" and "conservative" lines. I had great hopes when Bro. Miller came that some of these problems might be resolved by biblically sound and resolute teaching, especially from the pulpit. I was not disappointed by the things I heard and read from Bro. Miller. Later Bro. Whitten advised that on several occasions Bro. Miller came to his office in

the building (Bro. Whitten was an Elder and Director of the Brown Trail School of Preaching at the time) and they discussed the problems of the church, especially liberalism, and specifically the liberalistic problems in scriptural problems that had resulted in an eldership that was divided and stalemated. There were four elders on each "side." On the resignation, for health reasons, of one of the elders the liberal group held sway. It seems that Bro. Miller decided to use this inequality in the eldership to further his position. The things done at this time by the eldership, with the concurrence and help of Bro. Miller and other preachers in the employ of the congregation at the time, were certainly unethical and some unscriptural actions and teachings were committed and unscriptural positions rampant in the Brotherhood were supported and taught. Bro. Miller concurred and participated in these activities and evidently was the, or one of, the primary planners and instigators. Details are available and can be verified.

Just before my wife and I left I met with the remaining elders and asked that they please "do something," finally suggesting they resign and let the matters come before the congregation. They did have an "open" meeting but would not allow anyone to bring up any matter that occurred prior to two weeks before the date of the meeting. A tape of this meeting is also available.

A few months later Bro. Miller preached the sermon on re-evaluation/reaffirmation of the elders. Those that received less than 75% of the votes in disapproval were to resign. The vote was taken, thereof the "liberal" elders failed to be "reaffirmed" and "resigned". Bro. Miller was appointed Director of the School of Preaching, Bro. **Maxey Boren** became the pulpit preacher, and other positions changed. Sadly, other elders were appointed, members of the congregation, who were part of or at least witnesses of the unscriptural/unethical actions and teachings that had just transpired.

Some of the group that left, including me and my wife, worshipped for about two years with Bedford congregation and then formed the congregation, Northeast Church of Christ, now located at 1313 Karla Drive, Hurst, Texas 76053 in 1991. Several months later I, along with Brother's Ed Clark and **Graham Cain**, was [sic] appointed as an elder and served until I resigned a few weeks after the death of my wife in 1999. While I was an elder of the Northeast congregation I requested of Bro. **Bob Watts** (one of the elders of the Brown Trail congregation that was reaffirmed and who had in the past upheld scriptural positions) that the current elders of both congregations and all possible of the primary parties involved in the dispute when Brother's Whitten and Clark resigned have a meeting; a controlled meeting with fair and impartial ground rules agreed to beforehand. He said he would take up the request with the Brown Trail Elders. I have never heard from him concerning this matter.

There has never been, to my knowledge, private or public recognition of error or sin and/or repentance on the part of any. Can sin be "swept under the rug". My heart's desire and prayer is that these matters be scripturally resolved. I am sure that the parties involved now at Northeast would be happy and please to meet with Bro. Miller and/or the elders of the Brown Trail congregation and any other involved.

Thank you for considering these matters. I hope that you will reconsider your employment of Bro. Miller pending scriptural resolution. Souls are at stake.

In Christian Love,

[signed]
Ralph Beall

June 10, 2002
Ralph Beall
113 Lynn Drive
Hurst, TX 76053

Dear Brother Ralph

Thank you for your kind letter of June 2 about our recent announcement that Dave Miller is going to join our staff as of August 1. I appreciated the gentle attitude you exhibited in the letter. You clearly did not write to accuse us, but rather to inform us! Not every letter we receive gives us the benefit of the doubt as you did. I'm grateful that you did that. It's nice to see someone do unto others as they would others do unto them.

Some time ago, as you may remember, I sent you a complimentary copy of my newest book *Rock-Solid Faith: How to Sustain It*. That book was dedicated to two men: Dave Miller and **Earl Edwards** (of Freed-Hardeman University). No one at the time offered a word of criticism about my having dedicated the book to Dave. Not a single person called to suggest that I had erred, or that I possibly should have investigated a little deeper into Dave's background before doing something so serious as dedicating one of the books in Rock Solid Faith trilogy to him. It was only after I announced his forthcoming arrival at Apologetics Press that I received any comments at all (via your letter, and one from the Bedford/Hurst/Fort Worth area) about Dave's alleged misconduct almost a decade and a half ago. Oddly, the other individual who wrote likewise received a complimentary copy of my book—yet, until now, said nothing to me about my having dedicated it to Dave. I confess to being a little “confused” about all of this. It seems that the book dedication would have been reason enough for me to receive a letter. Yet none came.

Ralph, I can say with all honesty that I never knew the circumstances surrounding your leaving Brown Trail. I knew that “something” wasn't right, of course, or you (and Eddie, Graham, Ed, and so many others whom I admire so deeply) never would have departed in the first place. But, to the best of my memory, I never spoke with you, or anyone else, about exactly why you left. At the time, I was separated from the Brown Trail controversy by many miles. Plus, I had just had two of the most unpleasant experiences of my life shortly before the Brown Trail episode—my departure from Tennessee Bible College (along with 7 other faculty members, all of whom resigned in one single day) because of unethical actions of the school's president, and my authorship of *Is Genesis a Myth?* to expose the teaching of evolution as fact at my alma mater, Abilene Christian University. It was not a pleasant time to be “inquisitive” of other people's actions or situations. My own plate was far too full. Plus, the teaching of 1 Peter 4:15 about “meddling in other men's matters” was then, and is now, very important to me. The matters at Brown Trail were none of my business; thus I made no attempt to inquire about what was going on, or why.

I have said all of this to be sure that you understand—and I say this as honestly as I now how—that I not only had no idea why you and the others left Brown Trail, but I also had no idea that it had anything to do with Dave Miller. Please believe me when I say, Ralph, I truly did not know about any of the things you mentioned in your let-

ter.

Everything I have known about Dave Miller through the years has been nothing but positive. His book, *Piloting the Strait* is, in my opinion, one of the great brotherhood classics. Not long ago, he held a Gospel meeting at the Eastern Meadows congregation here in Montgomery where Rhonda and I worship—and did an outstanding job. I have not been in any kind of “close” association with him through the years, but I have spoken on various lectureships in the past when he, too, was one of the speakers. The people I know, and with whom I checked (which obviously excludes you—since I simply did not know that your leaving Brown Trail had anything to do with Dave) as I began the lengthy process of bringing Dave on board at A.P., had nothing but good to say about him. I inquired of former Brown Trail students, former instructors, and even current Brown Trail members whom I know personally (and who are financial supporters of our work, as you have been for so many years). Every where I turned to investigate or seek counsel, I was given the same story—Dave would be an invaluable addition to our work. No one (literally!) had anything negative to say.

I realize that your response would be, “Well, you obviously didn't look hard enough, or in the right places.” That may well be true. But to my credit, I did try-diligently! I think you know me well enough to know that I never would even think about bringing someone into this work who was unsound, unethical, or whose presence would bring disrepute upon my life's work. I have closely nurtured and guarded this work—as if it were my own child—for twenty five years. And I am not about to stop now.

What more I can say, I'm unsure—except for these two things. First, I cannot tell you how much your financial support has meant to us through the years. Month after month, you have faithfully helped us. And my staff and I are appreciative (something I hope we have made clear to you via our numerous letters and complimentary gifts over time). Second, please understand that I am the “odd man out” here. I was not involved in any of the events in 1989/1990 at Brown Trail, nor did I know anything about them until a week or so ago. Plus, those events occurred 13 years ago, in another place, in another state, far removed from both my work and from me. I will, however, to the best of my ability, investigate what you view as a potential problem for our work.

As I close, please let me say how sad I am at the events that have taken place that caused you to have to write the letter you did. I have accepted your letter in the same gentle spirit in which it was written, as I hope you will accept this, my reply. To know that I have done something that now is being viewed by one of our treasured financial supporters as an egregious error is indeed a difficult burden to bear—and one that I do not take lightly. Please forgive me of any hurt I have caused you or your family in this matter. I assure you (and I think you know this) it certainly was not intentional.

Thank you, Ralph, for all you have done for the work of Apologetics Press. You did not say (or even hint) in your letter as to whether or not your support would continue. Naturally, I hope it will. But if, as a matter of conscience, that is not possible, rest assured that I will understand. I never would ask someone to support a work involving a person they feel is undeserving of that support. Again, you know me too well to think otherwise. Yours prayers on my behalf would be deeply appreciated.

Most Sincerely, in Christ,
[signed]
Bert

Ralph D. Beall
113 Lynn Dr.
Hurst, Texas 76053
(817)268-1019

June 14, 2002

Dear Brother Thompson,

Thank you for your letter of June 10. I am so very sorry that these matters had to come to your attention and take you from a work that I consider very valuable to the cause of Christ. I understand your frustration and being a little “confused”.

I hesitated to write because I did not want to be, or be viewed as, a troublemaker, gossip, fanatic, unloving, or one that would cause division in the brotherhood. God will deal with such. These are also the reasons I did not write when the book “**Rock-Solid Faith: How To Sustain It**” was published and I read the dedication. Please forgive me.

I did want to inform you for your works sake; but, I suppose, deep down, this was a plea for help in the resolution of this matter for me and many others. My hearts desire is for the salvation of the souls of Bro. Miller, myself, and all the others involved in these matters. There are many in the Brown Trail congregation, and in other places, that were there and aware of the things that happened. Five preachers/instructors, most well known over the brotherhood; the Elders at that time and those that were appointed to replace the ones who failed to be “re-affirmed”; the Deacons at that time; and many other members participated and/or knew what occurred over the period of several months and climaxed by the “re-evaluation/re-confirmation” of the serving Elders by vote of the membership. Can sin be ignored without consequence? Can it simply be forgotten? (II Jn. 9-11; Mt.5:23&24, 18:15-17; Lk. 17:3&4) Many, including myself, and from both sides, should have made greater efforts to reconcile, to get right with God and one another. It is not too late as long as we have our mental faculties and live. (II Cor. 6:2, 7:9&10) I sorrow and ask forgiveness of God and those against whom I have sinned by not persevering in compliance with Matt. 5 and Matt. 18. I desire to make right before God and man any sin that can be laid to my charge. I know others now at the Northeast congregation and who were involved in and/or aware of the events at the Brown Trail have the same desire.

As previously indicated, I believe Bro. Miller acted in an unethical, unscriptural, sinful way to gain a position. You state, “I will investigate what you view as a potential problem for our work.” I would like very much, as I further consider these matters, for you to show Bro. Miller my previous letter and this one as well. My desire is to meet with him and others involved as we might deem needful. I am persuaded that souls are at stake. Some have already gone to their reward. No one has the guarantee of tomorrow.

Again, my apologies, that I have felt constrained to write you of these matters. Perhaps if we all had made greater efforts to meet in accordance with the word of God and consider the matters objectively in the light of applicable scripture, they would have been settled long ago. Brothers Whitten, Clark and Cain, the ones principally involved and with firsthand knowledge of most everything that was happening, were refused in their efforts to tell their side. I too was refused a meeting as indicated in my previous letter.

Bro. Eddie Whitten has also written you though I have not

read his letter. I have composed my letter and determined to send it to you before I knew he had written. He had no input in the content of my letter, nor did he or anyone request that I write. I did give him a copy of my letter and he confirmed its accuracy as he remembered events. I will show him this letter as well, since he and Ed Clark desires, and would be parties in any discussions that may be arranged. My wife and I were just members at Brown Trail trying to maintain and stay in a scripturally sound congregation, not major participants in the things that occurred. There could have been reasons, in the mind of some, to change the management and direction of the school of preaching; however, to my knowledge, this was never stated. Everything was complicated by the majority in the Eldership being or leaning to the liberal, unscriptural side or viewpoint. Long standing scriptural positions had been taken by some of the Elders and this can be confirmed.

Bro. Thompson, I too request your prayers. I know men can change as evidenced in the life of Jacob and others we read about in the Bible. Bro. Miller’s book, “**Piloting The Strait**”, and other works are very good, doctrinally sound, and exceptional in composition and content. I am happy when the truth is put forth. Truth stands, regardless. We have some in the brotherhood who formerly taught the truth, God’s Word, and have now apostatized. Certainly those that heard, believed, and obeyed the truth the apostates preached (not because a certain person taught it, but because it was the truth) were/are just as saved as those who have heard and obeyed the truth taught by a brother who continues in the faith.

I hold you and your teaching in the highest regard, a teaching much needed in the Kingdom.

Sincerely,
your Brother in Christ,
[signed]
Ralph Beall

June 20,2002
Ralph Beall
113 Lynn Drive
Hurst, TX 76053

Dear brother Ralph:

Your letter of June 14 has just arrived. Thank you for offering such a gentle response to my letter of June 10. I should have expected no less.

First, I noticed that you mentioned in your letter the fact that Eddie Whitten wrote me. I need to explain to you that I did not discuss Eddie’s letter in my letter to you because he specifically asked me to keep it completely confidential- a request that I was happy to honor. If he wanted you to know that he wrote me (as he obviously did), that, of course, was his choice. I just wanted you (and him) to know that I did not violate the confidence I pledged to keep.

Second, Eddie asked me specifically not to share the contents of his letter with Dave or anyone else (a request, once again, that I am honoring). Your second letter, however, asks just the opposite, and urges me to share both of your letters with Dave. I will do exactly that. I appreciate immensely your willingness to let me do so. [Without your permission, I would not have shown them, or discussed their contents, with anyone.]

Dave is in Arizona currently, visiting his father (who is dying

of prostate cancer and is not expected to live through the summer). Upon Dave's return to Texas (around July 6), his plans are to begin packing for his upcoming move to Alabama. However, prior to that, I will forward copies of both of your letters to him and leave this in his hands (which is exactly where it should be, don't you think?). It will then be his decision-and his decision alone-regarding what to do in connection with your request for a meeting.

I appreciate your desire to do what is right, as Dave no doubt will. I also appreciate your kindness in the way you handle this matter from our perspective here at Apologetics Press. You could have been harsh, but you were not. That meant a

lot to me, I assure you.

I would ask you to remember that Dave has a lot on his plate right now. His father is dying. He has to pack (after living in the same place for 14 years!). And then he must move to another state far away. If things do not progress quite as rapidly as you would like, please keep all of this in mind if you would. Again, that's for writing, and for the Christ-like attitude you expressed in your letters.

Most Sincerely, in Christ,
[Signed]
Bert

Bert Thompson Wrote:

"I HAD NOT A CLUE ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING ON AT BROWN TRAIL"

David P. Brown

On Monday, May 20, 2002 the following email was sent by Bert Thompson (The.Doc@mind.spring.com) to **Dave Miller** (dmiller777@juno.com.).

Dr. Dave:

... While I'm writing, I need to discuss something else of a serious nature with you. And I've chosen to do it first by e-mail because I wanted you to have time to think about any response you might wish to give, rather than me hitting you "cold"—with no forewarning.

As you know, we sent a 2-page letter to all of our financial supporters on May 15, announcing your impending arrival. Since that letter was mailed, I have received two phone calls from two different people in Texas who are solidly behind our work (one of them sent us \$5,000 a few weeks ago). Both of the people asked about the same exact situation (these people do not know each other, and have not communicated about this).

Thompson then assured Miller that he was not accusing him of anything on the basis of rumor, but only asking the questions asked by the callers, using the terminology that they use. Thompson continues:

Please do not infer that I agree with the questions, or the terminology employed. Both parties who telephoned asked me if I knew anything about the controversy going on at Brown Trail in regard to your "participation" in what they referred to as the "**Everett Chambers** marriage/divorce/remarriage green-card fiasco"? (Sic) I told both of them that I had heard nothing about anything of the sort.

From what they said, it was suggested that Everett defrauded the U.S. Government by acting as if he were coming into the country for the purpose of getting married to an American citizen (who, one of the callers indicated, turned out to be a relative). Then, so the story goes, even though Everett did this, he was put into a position of authority at Brown Trail, with your foreknowledge and approval. Later, Everett divorced this person (not for adultery) once he was in the States and had his green card, and either is about to remarry

or already has remarried, with Trail people throwing him and his fiancée a wedding shower.

The callers continued with their scenario to suggest that a Brown Trail instructor—**Gary Fallis** (SP?)—ended up resigning to express his disagreement with your "approval" of Everett's shenanigans, and that you had concluded that Everett was scriptural candidate for a second marriage because he did not have the "intent" to actually "marry" his relative in the first place.

One of the callers suggested that all of this has caused a significant (and widespread "public furor" at Brown Trail—one that is going on currently and that has put you at odds with the eldership, students, etc. I was informed that on a recent Sunday (this past one???), Maxie presented strong sermon on unity from the Brown Trail pulpit that was "aimed" at dealing with this very situation. And so on and so on.

Let me reassure you that neither of the people who telephoned was calling to in any way castigate you. They were calling because they are concerned for our work, and reputation, here at A.P. They said that from the tone of excitement in my letter about your future arrival, it seemed apparent that I had not a clue about what was going on at Brown Trail. **I told both of them that I had not heard a word about any of this** (bold mine-Editor), but that out of deference to them as friends of our work, I would check it out.

That is why I'm writing you—first. Could you please call me at your earliest convenience...and **tell me what's going on? I need to know the facts in the matter, so that I will know how to respond to any possible future inquiries that may come my way...** (Bold mine-Editor).

...I do want to stress again that I am only inquiring. Please understand that. **I've suddenly been put between the proverbial "rock and hard place" on this, and was caught completely off guard by the two phone calls. Any help you could give me in understanding what's going on would mean a lot** (bold mine-Editor).

Many thanks!
Dr. Bert

It is important to notice the difference in the dates of Thompson's original letter sent to those on the Apologetics Press mailing list for the primary purpose of announcing that he (Bert Thompson) had "pulled off a major 'coup'—I've just hired Dr. Dave Miller to join us in our work at Apologetics Press!" *That letter is dated May 15, 2002.*

In the letter exchange between Ralph Beall and Bert Thompson (printed earlier in this issue of *CFTF*) in his letter of June 10, 2002, he wrote of his investigation of Dave Miller. Thompson wrote:

I inquired of former Brown Trail students, former instructors, and even current Brown Trail members whom I know personally (and who are financial supporters of our work, as you have been for so many years). Every where I turned to investigate or seek counsel, I was given the same story—Dave would be an invaluable addition to our work. No one (literally!) had anything negative to say.

I realize that your response would be, "Well, you obviously didn't look hard enough, or in the right places." That may well be true. But to my credit, I did try—diligently!

If Thompson had done all of the intensive, extensive and exhaustive investigating of Dave Miller before he hired him that he reported to Ralph Beall in his (Thompson's) letter to him on June 10th (and this would have taken some time to do), how was it that just a few days later he was so desperate for information about reports concerning Miller when he wrote him on May 20th? Indeed, it was in that email to Miller that Thompson begged him for information about which he had first learned from the telephone callers. As big a "to do" as

the re-evaluation/reaffirmation of the Brown Trail elders and the Everett Chambers debacles were, how was it that Thompson in his exhaustive investigation could not stumble across at least one Brown Trail member that could have informed him about these sad matters in which Miller was involved? And, why was it that Miller kept back such a public mess from Thompson in which he was such a significant player? Indeed, his part in that specific Brown Trail blow-out led to his leaving the employment of that church.

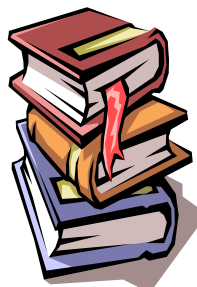
People can blind themselves to the reality of these matters if they desire, but something is rotten in Denmark when it comes to Thompson's investigation of Dave Miller prior to his being hired by Thompson. Besides these matters, when others attempted to reason with Bert Thompson regarding Dave Miller's beliefs, he ignored the evidence and with scorn dismissed some of those who attempted to warn him. Of a truth, Thompson was arrogant and condescending to some who sought to enlighten him regarding the Miller's beliefs.

And, just think, those matters discussed in this article happened over two years before the most recent AP mess, when **Frank Chesser**, the preacher for the Panama Street congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, exposed his true heart in the vile letters he wrote in his unwarranted attack on **Dub McClish's** 'Summary' of the most recent AP calamity.

Ah, the love of money, sex, and power—sure looks like a lawyer's and/or a Hollywood screenwriter's gold mine. Move over Roman Catholic Church and make way for some in the church of Christ. "O what a tangled web we weave, when at first we practice to deceive."

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The Last Word...

SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Kent Bailey

The basic message of the Bible deals with the reality of sin in the lives of all accountable individuals. Paul the apostle stated: **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...”** (Romans 3:23). **“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Romans 6:23).

From these two passages we properly conclude that all accountable individuals reach a specific point of time where they become guilty of sin and stand in need of Salvation. Implicit within Romans 6:23 is taught the reality that God provides a scheme of Redemption for all those in need of forgiveness, and such is conditioned upon humanity’s obedience to God’s divine conditions. In this particular study we are certainly mindful of Bible teaching regarding the importance of such:

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that by the grace of God tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9).

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:7-8).

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you but: ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (I Corinthians 6:9-11).

And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him... (Hebrews 5:9).

In light of the Scriptures we are reminded that by the love, mercy, and grace of God, all who receive His divine forgiveness do so as being unworthy of the great price paid for our sin debt by the precious blood of God the Son and the Son of the living God. When the alien sinner believes the gospel (John 1:12; 8:24), repents of sin (Acts 17:30; II Corinthians 7:10), confesses Christ (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10), and is baptized unto the remission of past sins (Acts 2:38; I Corinthians 12:13) that individual is pardoned of all sin and is added to the totality of the saved which constitutes the New Testament church. By the same principle when a fallen child of God repents of covenant sins, confesses them to God in prayer and asks for divine forgiveness (Acts 8:22; I John 1:7-10) restoration to the fellowship of God

is affected. In either case, whether it be an alien sinner, or a fallen child of God the faithful Christian will stand ready to assist the newly forgiven individual in living a life of faithfulness.

In reality, the issue is not forgiveness at all. However, some individuals (due to various reasons) seem to lay aside all common sense and Bible knowledge based upon a sick and stupid hyper-sentimentality and totally ignore the reality that while forgiveness of sin may be affected, serious consequences of those sins may still remain and go unchanged for many years.

Suppose one is guilty of stealing from one’s employer. At a later time this individual meets the conditions to receive God’s divine forgiveness. Certainly conditioned upon proper correction of this crime, the employer is obligated to forgive this individual as has God, but does this obligate this employer to retain this individual as an employee? Obviously not.

Suppose a brother in Christ is guilty of the sin of fornication. Such is a sin against God, his wife and family, society, the Lord’s church, and his own body.

May he repent, confess his sin and be restored? Yes indeed. Are we obligated to forgive such an individual? Yes we are, even to the point of encouraging him to do that which is right and stand ready to assist him in getting his life back in order. This does not mean, however, that the wife, in extending forgiveness, no longer has the authority for a scriptural divorce, nor that brethren ignore the consequences of this terrible wrong.

John the Baptist called for “fruits of repentance” (Matthew 3:1-8); the church that met in Jerusalem desired adequate evidence that the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was genuine before fellowship was extended (Acts 9:26-27); and when a brother in Christ involves himself in a particular sin that brings great harm to himself, his family, the church, innocent young people in addition to society as a whole, the consequences of such sin must be faced and dealt with rather than a cover-up and pretending that all things are now normal.

I recently received a copy of a letter from a brother in Christ taking another brother in Christ “to the woodshed” for facing the reality of the consequences of another individual’s sin. Charges were brought against the brother addressed in this particular letter as if he had misrepresented facts when only he was attempting to face reality regarding the horrible consequences of personal sins committed by one who had been involved in gross immoral conduct for an extended period. Again, based upon repentance the issue is not forgiveness; neither is the issue a willingness to assist another in

getting their life back into proper order. The issue is one of facing the very real consequences of sin with the realization that reformation, rehabilitation, and time to demonstrate “fruits of repentance” stand in proper order.

If there are any points to be made at all in the unsolicited letter, the logical consequence of the affirmations of this confused author would demand every criminal in our land be released from prison upon any alleged repentance and that law enforcement agencies are guilty of the worst form of gossip when they warn communities about the reality of a convicted pedophile locating in a specific area after serving a prison sentence.

While God indeed requires us to love the sinner yet hate the sin, such a divine requirement does not mean that we are to demonstrate more love to the sinner than to the innocent victim of his crime. Let those guilty of gross immorality obey the divine conditions of pardon and receive God’s forgiveness. Let them also see the need for reformation and rehabilitation of life, recognizing that certain consequences of their sin (especially those involving other individuals) must be dealt with forthrightly and honestly even if such alters the influence of their personal lives.

—124 Executive Meadows
Lenoir City, Tennessee 37771
KBailey385@aol.com

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. 770-382-6775, www.cartersvillechurchofchrist.org. Sun. 10, 11a.m., 6:30 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Bobby D. Gayton, evangelist- email: bdgayton@juno.com.

-Indiana-

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

-Louisiana-

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

-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.

-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 Contending for the Faith Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February. www.churchesofchrist.com

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

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

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

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

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

-Wyoming-

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

PROBLEM CHURCH MEMBERS
(AND BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS) 2 OF 3



ABSENT ANDY
THE SOLUTION:
HEB 10:25



JELLYFISH JERRY
THE SOLUTION: PSA 27:14

SELF-RIGHTEOUS
SALLY
THE SOLUTION:
LK.18:9-14



ENTERTAINING ED
THE SOLUTION: JN.4:24



GRUMBLE

COMPLAINING CARL
THE SOLUTION: PHIL 2:14

JESUS USED THE
KJV, DIDN'T HE?



IGNORANT IDA
THE SOLUTION: II TIM. 2:15

NED
NEVERGROW
THE SOLUTION: HEB.5:12-13



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