

To Whom It May Concern:

**The Following Exchange Took Place Between The
Elders Northside church of Christ, Calhoun, GA
And
Elders Highland church of Christ, Dalton, GA**

The Issue

**AP/Miller Controversy And “Giving & Receiving” As It
Relates To Biblical Fellowship...**

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ITEM #1

The article below was published in "Seek The Old Paths" (April/May 2004). We believe this article adequately describes the responsibilities that we, as the elders of the Northside church of Christ, are commanded to keep when dealing with issues facing the Lord's church such as the ones presented here.

God's Message To The SHEPHERDS Of His Sheep

The following passages give some of the instructions as well as some of the responsibilities of God's SHEPHERDS under both the Old and New Covenants.

"His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are SHEPHERDS that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter" (Isa. 56:10-11).

"Son of man, prophesy against the SHEPHERDS of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the SHEPHERDS; Woe be to the SHEPHERDS of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the SHEPHERDS feed the flocks" (Ezek. 34:2)?

"My people hath been lost sheep: their SHEPHERDS have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place" (Jer. 50:6).

"Therefore, ye SHEPHERDS, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no SHEPHERD, neither did my SHEPHERDS search for my flock, but the SHEPHERDS fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye SHEPHERDS, hear the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the SHEPHERDS; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the SHEPHERDS feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them" (Ezek. 34:7-10).

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you OVERSEERS, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).

"Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:2-4).

The man with the most awesome responsibility is not the president or any politician, it is the responsibilities of being an elder (a SHEPHERD, bishop, pastor, overseer) in the Lord's church. However, to see how some who claim to be SHEPHERDS treat those responsibilities, you would probably come to the conclusion that they have little real concern about the duties described in the Pattern found only in the Bible. Some of these men would appear to be a board of directors over a social club, rather than SHEPHERDS over God's church (spiritual Israel).

I have quoted passages from the Old Testament (cf. Rom 15:4) to show that God has always held His shepherds responsible for their duties to the flock for which they are given oversight. I have quoted the inspired writers of the New Testament to show that the duties of the shepherds under Christ is not so different from those under the prophets. Further, we learn that God will not take lightly the neglecting of duties by shepherds under either Testament.

The "better" translation (in my opinion, E.G.) in Ephesians 4:11 of the Greek word *poimen* would have been SHEPHERDS, rather than, pastors. The Greek word is found 18 times in the New Testament, and is translated pastors one time, and shepherd(s) 17 times. Jesus is called both a Shepherd and a

Bishop.

I prefer the term shepherds, because not only are shepherds to see that the flock is fed, but also that they are visited regularly to see if any are ill and in need of special care. This kind of care by shepherds is almost as rare in churches of Christ as is discipline by these same men. If a sheep is found to have a disease which is fatal and contagious, it must be isolated and kept apart from the healthy sheep. Shepherds who “know their sheep,” will know when special measures are needed, and faithful shepherds will care for the sick, the lame, and will hunt the ones gone astray. Is that the way it is today? It is, only where men know and appreciate the awesome responsibilities of being a shepherd. It is only where men realize that not only are they watching for souls, but that God holds them personally responsible for souls in their fold.

In many (maybe most) places, a group of men who know little, if anything, about God's duties for His shepherds assume the “board of directors” attitude, which is completely foreign to the New Testament Pattern. They then attempt to “rule by remote control by holding closed meetings among themselves periodically. They hire a PR man called, THE Minister, and who is the “designated” sub-shepherd. He is to “feed” the flock with sermonettes full of catchy, flowery phrases which will keep everyone happy and feeling good about themselves. Thus, in the modern church, under the sub-shepherd, seldom is heard a negative word, and the board continues to play the game of being SHEPHERDS. If the college trained pulpit “puppet” forgets his “p's and q's” learned under the distinguished professor, he is called before the ruling committee and given his options.

The duties of shepherds (elders, bishops, overseers) is to feed and to lead: not to sit and send. While successful elders must learn to delegate some responsibilities, they must set examples for the flock. If elders expects one under their oversight to win souls, they must lead the way. If elders expect members to be students of the Bible, they must be examples. If elders expect members to live right, they must lead an exemplary life before the sheep. Leaderless sheep are subject to all kinds of problems. Shepherds who are out of touch with the fold, leave the door of the sheepfold open to all kinds of dangers. God said, “*Woe to the shepherds who have allowed my sheep to go astray.*” Yet, many shepherds expect the “hired man” to keep up with the sheep, and to tend to their problems. But, that is not God's plan at all.

Why is the church of Christ in many places today ignorant, indifferent, and spiritually unemployed? Because a local church will do no better than they are taught, and most will not do as well as they are taught. Thus, the key is teaching, both in word and in deed (Col. 3:17).

In the verses quoted at the beginning of this article, God said *the shepherds were ignorant!* That is also one of the problems in spiritual Israel today (Gal. 6:16). One of the qualifications for a shepherd is desire (1 Tim. 3:1). Some congregations have taken a man's desire for the work and his ability to bare offspring, as the two qualifications necessary to be a bishop. However, ignorant shepherds will result in an ignorant membership.

Another defect in the shepherds of old was, *they could not bark!* What good is a watchdog that cannot bark? No one would buy a watchdog that could not bark, for that is what they do when it is needed. Their barking warns the unsuspecting of danger. Rather than being on guard, and ready to sound a warning, the shepherds like to sleep and slumber. Like dogs, the shepherds were greedy, and never have enough. Today, many shepherds, rather than leading the church in doing the work Jesus came to do (“to seek and save the lost,” Luke 19:10), sit and wish for sheep from other flocks to come and join their sheepfold. Depending on WHO the preacher is, and the message he speaks, sheep from other folds will be drawn to them. And, in many areas, this is exactly what has happened.

In one of the most powerful passages in the book of Acts, Paul addressed the shepherds of the flock in Ephesus. In Acts 20:17-35, Paul spoke to the elders in a tearful plea as he reminded them of his association with them, of their responsibilities to the church at Ephesus, and what would soon happen to the congregation due to the very men he was addressing. He began by reminding them of their primary duty to self, and then to the flock. Then he must have stabbed deeply into their consciences as he told them that from among them would arise men who would be enemies of Christ and would destroy the sheep. They would teach perverse things to draw away disciples after them. “Drawing away” meant they would be leaving the safety of faithful membership in the church of God. The shepherds at Ephesus, like

those in the Old Testament, would “scatter the sheep,” and would discontinue to feed them with the proper diet, the word of God!

A group may continue to meet for years under so-called shepherds and in a building with “Church of Christ” carved on the front; but, that does not mean God still recognizes them. In chapters two and three of Revelation, some of the seven churches received warnings to repent or have their candlestick removed by the Lord. That meant they would lose their light-bearing abilities and would be lost.

Paul had done all he could. He had “*not shunned to declare all the counsel of God to them.*” That is all any preacher can do, whether inspired or not. There are no inspired men today, but it does not relieve any preacher from the duty to preach and teach, to the best of his ability, the word that will judge all men in the last day.

One of the most serious statements to elders, or any considering being an elder is: “*...for they (elders, shepherds, bishops, pastors, overseers) watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief.*” This statement, and others in the Bible, should send a chill through the body of any man who is already an elder, or is considering becoming one. It ought to cause a lot of soul searching before one assumes the most awesome responsibility known to man: that of being a shepherd over God’s flock.

Consider the reward! Consider the reward for being a faithful shepherd, but also consider the reward if one fails to live up to his responsibilities as a shepherd. No one is forced to be a shepherd; but, IF that decision is made, the rewards in this life will be minimal and the heartaches many, and the responsibilities are surely awesome and almost overwhelming.

Being a shepherd over God’s people is one of the most important and demanding duties a man is called upon to do. It is entered voluntarily and the burdens are great and yet rewarding if one continues faithful unto the end.

Let all caring saints pray that the church will raise up and train men to be elders who will be qualified to shepherd the flock. It will take much study on their part and a willingness to serve God at any cost. It will involve marrying the right woman who is capable of helping rear faithful children.

Though men who are Scripturally qualified to be shepherds seem to be few today, the need has never been greater. Will you help someone become a shepherd over the flock of God. If you are a young man, and have the faith, knowledge, and determination, why don’t you prepare yourself to be a shepherd over the church of God?....

By Earl Gieseke

The following words were written in the DEFENDER Volume X February 1981 Number 2

The Lord’s church has always had to face threats and dangers both from within and without. Christians are always just one generation away from apostasy and the price of freedom through truth is eternal vigilance. We must continually bring ourselves to “walk in the light, as he is in the light” (1 John 1:7).

Today the churches of Christ world-wide face the serious menace of the demon called liberalism. Its threat grows and not lessens as time goes by and unless met head-on and defeated, the church will be swept into apostasy. Unless individuals, congregations, papers, schools of preaching and colleges walk circumspectly they will depart from their original concern for and commitment to God’s absolute truth.

Christian, watch! Soldiers of Christ, beware! Problems in the church should not discourage Christians or weaken the faith of the faithful. In time of trouble men and women of deep dedication to God and His truth are needed more than ever. Some want to leave when the battle for truth is set in array and the devil attacks with all of his wicked devices. The fact that there is liberalism within the church and Christians now face an ominous threat from Satan is reason enough to cause us to fight and not flee (see 1 Tim. 6:12).

In order that we might know who our enemy is liberalism must be defined. Liberalism is basically an attitude. This attitude is often expressed in many ways and ideas. Liberalism is an attitude toward the will of God which

seeks to loose, undo, release or soften that which God has said on any matter Liberalism affects the church by its attitude toward fellowship. Confirmed liberals hold that there is no doctrinal pattern to which one must hold in order to be saved. Doctrine is looked upon as divisive and legalistic. Fellowship for the liberal is never to be determined upon a doctrinal basis. His plea is for a “unity in diversity.” The liberal brother will extend fellowship to everyone and everything as long as it claims to be Christian. Liberalism is nothing less than apostasy... Pat McGee

ITEM #2

Our concern....

The Northside elders take our responsibility of shepherding very seriously. We are aware of the digression taking place in the Lord’s church, particularly at this time. We have the enormous responsibility to look at all the facts and evidence surrounding any controversy and determine the truth based on the only objective standard we have, the Bible. (II Tim 3:16-17).

We are in a great spiritual battle with our Lord against evil. Our battle field is the souls of men. Our weapon is the “sword of the spirit”. Our ammunition is words... “truth”. Our enemy is “Satan” and his men servants “false teachers”. Their weapon is “liberalism”, “anti-ism”, “extremism”, “legalism”, “Humanism”, etc. Their ammunition is words... “deceits & lies”. They hide behind a cloud of deception to protect their real identity. Our Lord said “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” (Matt 7:15). “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” (Matt 10:16). Paul said, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (I Thes 5:21). John said, “BELOVED, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (I John 4:1). Paul said concerning the duty of an elder, “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” (Titus 1:9-11).

The Northside elders have refused to go to the brotherhood for their consensus on this issue. We have refused to poll the congregation about what they “feel” the truth is in our present controversy (although we have the utmost confidence in the knowledge and convictions of the Northside members on any issue). We have chosen rather to go to the scriptures for instruction and guidance as we examine the facts and evidence surrounding this present controversy. God warned in Exodus 23:2 “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:”

The Controversy:

Our present controversy came to our attention on July 29, 2005, when we received a copy of the AP/Miller endorsement (see item #3). We were surprised to see brother’s Gilreath (director of GBN and one of its overseeing elders) and Dearman (program director of GBN) on this list. We were concerned about this endorsement because Barry Gilreath, Jr. (also one of the Highland elders and overseers of GBN) was scheduled to speak on our upcoming lectureship dealing with "church discipline".

We were surprised and disappointed because we had brought the Dave Miller issue to the attention of the Highland elders last September 2004 (see item#4) . We let them know our concerns about their using Miller with GBN considering all the controversy surrounding him. They had indicated earlier in

their planning meetings and advertising material that they were going to use Miller in some capacity. Others also warned GBN about the issues surrounding Dave Miller. We learned in June that the past editor of TGJ, Dub McClish, wrote GBN director Barry Gilreath Sr. in February 2005 concerning the same issue, Dave Miller. Brother McClish voiced TGJ's concerns (and policy) about using Miller considering all of the evidence surrounding his false teaching. The Gospel Journal had refused to run a request for a second ad in the March 2005 edition until this concern was cleared-up (see item #5).

The Northside elders understand very well the present controversy surrounding AP and Dave Miller. We believe the AP endorsement letter, which was signed by sixty men, is unscriptural. We believe those who signed this letter, knowing the controversy surrounding Miller, were bidding God's speed to an organization of people who support a false teacher in violation of scripture (Rom 16:17; 2 Thes 3:6; 2 John 9-11).

Since only one of the Highland elders had signed the AP endorsement we decided to give the other elders an opportunity to express their position on GBN's endorsement of AP and Miller. We wrote Highland a letter on August 5th and asked if the AP/Miller endorsement was the consensus of the whole eldership (see item #6). We needed this information before making any decision as to how we would handle this situation. After receiving their response to our letter and after a phone conversation with brother Gilreath Sr. we decided we must write a second letter to clarify the confusion their response at created. (see item#6).

On September 6th, having not received a response from our second letter, we called Barry Gilreath Jr. to confirmed what their position was on the AP/Miller endorsement. Sadly he confirmed that the eldership upheld GBN's endorsement of AP and Miller. Regrettably the Northside elders had no choice but to rescind brother Gilreath Jr.'s invitation to speak on our upcoming lectureship (see item #6).

As a result of these decisions the Highland elders made a "bold" but unscriptural decision to withdraw fellowship from the Northside eldership on October 30, 2005.

This pamphlet should provide an adequate explanation regarding our decision to withdraw our invitation of brother Gilreath Jr. and sufficient evidence to show the unscriptural actions of the Highland elders.

Northside Elders

ITEM #3

The following endorsement letter was mailed to supporters of AP.

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT

We, the undersigned, wish to announce that we have complete confidence that Apologetics Press is on a firm footing that will insure its continued work of excellence. We commend AP to the brotherhood and recommend that it continue to be the recipient of financial and moral support.

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Jody Apple | Tom Holland | Basil Overton |
| V.P. Black | Dale Hubbert | Kevin Patterson |
| Maxie Boren | Wayne Jackson | Max Patterson |
| Ted Burleson | Dan Jenkins | Denny Petrillo |
| Curtis Cates | Jeff Jenkins | David Pharr |
| Frank Chesser | Jerry Jenkins | Neal Pollard |
| Winford Clairborne | Edwin Jones | Jason Roberts |
| Bill Clary | John Kachelman, Jr. | David Sain |
| Glenn Colley | Andy Kizer | Paul Sain |
| Marlin Connelly | Drew Kizer | Phil Sanders |
| Jim Dearman | Scott Lambert | Billy Smith |
| Earl Edwards | Roy Lanier, Jr. | Lonnie Smith |
| Raymond Elliott | Mac Lyon | Robert Taylor |
| Barry Gilreath | Cliff Lyons | James Watkins |
| Barry Grider | Gary McDade | Allen Webster |
| Dennis Gullede | Don McWhorter | Chuck Webster |
| Ronnie Hayes | Joseph Meador | Dan Winkler |
| David Hester | James Meadows | Wendell Winkler |
| Alan Highers | Tom Miller | William Woodson |
| Sean Hochdorf | Hardeman Nichols | Gary Workman |

Panama Street Church of Christ
444 South Panama Street
Montgomery, AL 36107

ITEM #4

On 09/15/04 this (revised) letter along with 35 page attached documents (Not printed here) was given to Barry Gilreath, Jr. (Highland elder when he spoke at our 2004 lectureship) because of Dave Miller's proposed involvement with GBN.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Brother Dave Miller has been marked as teaching error on MDR and reevaluation and reaffirmation of elders. His false teaching on these issues have been fully exposed in several publications including *The Gospel Journal*, *CFTF*, *The Defender* and a website called *Brown Trail Truth* at <http://www.brown-trail-truth.com/>. The evidence of his errors and participation in them is overwhelming. Since brother Miller has been marked as a false teacher he should repent before faithful brethren use him in their meetings and lectureships or appear with him on such programs. The Bible clearly teaches us how to deal with a false teacher (Romans 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11). After reading the evidence provided by the brotherhood papers noted above and the website, one should be able to draw his own conclusions as to the error he holds.

Northside's concern with Dave Miller involves his violation of God's law on fellowship. Our dealings with brother Miller began in October 1999 when he conducted a meeting at the Calhoun Church of Christ in Calhoun, GA. The faithful had departed this congregation six months earlier (April 1999) because of doctrinal error, which was documented in our "Open Letter" and "Reasons Why We Left" journal.

Prior to brother Miller's coming to Calhoun, some of our Northside members who had left the Calhoun congregation contacted brother Miller and provided him with a copy of our "Open Letter" which we had sent to the Calhoun elders on April 18, 1999. In this "Open Letter" we documented the doctrinal reasons why we left. We also sent brother Miller a copy of the audio tapes Jerry Dyer (a marked false teacher) had presented at the Calhoun Church of Christ in February 1999, in which he taught at least seven doctrinal errors that are documented in our "Open Letter". When the Calhoun eldership were asked if they agreed with what Jerry Dyer taught, they all stated before thirty men in a meeting on March 22, 1999, that they believed and supported what Jerry Dyer taught. We knew then it was time to withdraw ourselves from that apostate eldership.

Who is Jerry C. Dyer? Jerry Dyer came to Calhoun as a "Specialist" in "Conflict Resolution". He had earned his M.D.R. in "Alternate Dispute Resolution" from Pepperdine University School of Law in Malibu, California. In January 1999 he was appointed director of "Clayton Pepper Center for Church Growth Studies" at Ohio Valley College (University). Jerry Dyer's first of many visits to the Calhoun church was February 5-7, 1999, shortly after taking his new position at Ohio Valley College. Jerry is a modern day "change agent" who teaches and promotes "unity in diversity".

The Northside brethren had been gone six months when brother Miller came as scheduled to the Calhoun Church of Christ and conducted a Friday-Sunday night meeting. On the last night he praised the Calhoun elders for their soundness and good leadership. He also praised the Calhoun preacher as a good man and encouraged the congregation to "hang in there" with these good men. He went on to say that he knew they had just been through a tough time, but in time things would get better. The sad part to all brother Miller's praises and endorsements of these brethren was the fact that he had all of the evidence that this was a marked apostate church for some five months before coming to Calhoun and he bid them God's speed anyway.

As a result of brother Miller's comments two of the Northside members called Dave Miller and asked him why he endorsed this apostate congregation in light of the documents he had been provided showing their doctrinal errors. His response was, "I don't have time to read or listen to all the stuff I receive". His attitude toward them was short and as if he didn't care about our concerns. Needless to say, he closed the minds of the Calhoun members that had been concerned about the soundness of the Calhoun Church of Christ. After that night, all doors that had remained open to teach and explain the doctrinal errors that existed in this apostate congregation were closed.

Three weeks after Dave Miller left Calhoun, the apostate church paid the expenses to move Avon Malone to Brown Trail School of Preaching from Oklahoma Christian University. It would appear that money was part of the motive for Miller's holding this liberal apostate leadership up in high esteem.

Dave Miller was reminded of the Calhoun problem again in 2003. David B. Smith, minister of the Northside church of Christ, along with other preachers, refused to speak on a lectureship with brother Miller because of the controversy surrounding him. Brother Smith wrote brother Oscar Craft, director of the Palmetto Bible Lectureship, Greer S.C., which was scheduled for October 12-16, 2003, and told him about the situation here in Calhoun and provided him with information about brother Miller's false teaching. Upon receiving this information, brother Craft wrote a letter of cancellation to brother Miller and asked him to repent of his error and correct the situation he had created in Calhoun. As of August 30, 2005 we have not heard from brother Miller concerning this situation.

The participation with and endorsement of a known apostate church by brother Dave Miller is a violation of God's law on fellowship (2 John 9-11). This is yet another error brother Miller needs to repent of before he can be received by the faithful.

Our prayer is that brother Miller will repent of all the error he has taught and of his participation with a known liberal congregation. We pray that he will repent and stop the division he is causing in the Lord's church. We hope he will live up to the man he presented himself to be in his book, *Piloting the Strait*. We pray that faithful brethren everywhere will uphold the marking that faithful brethren have placed on brother Dave Miller until he makes a public acknowledgment of repentance.

Elders, Northside church of Christ
Calhoun, Georgia

Bobby Hall
Ron Hall
Terry York

ITEM #5

On 02/26/05 Dub McClish, then editor of TGJ, sent his first letter to GBN after learning of their possible participation with Dave Miller. Northside had no prior knowledge of this exchange until June 2005, at which time we requested a copy and permission to print it below:

Dear brethren:

I regret that we will not be able to repeat the Gospel Broadcast Network ad in the March issue of *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL*. From the first issue of our paper (January 2000), our advertising policy has included the following statement: "The editors and publishers of *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL* are eager to advertise and publicize every endeavor that we deem to be in harmony with Truth and righteousness." I have very recently received word that you are planning to use some brethren to provide content for the Network's broadcasts whom *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL* cannot endorse through its pages, particularly brother Mack Lyon and one or more from the staff of Apologetics Press. If my information is incorrect concerning their participation in GBN, I will gladly stand corrected.

My purpose in writing is not to attempt to control or dictate your programming. Nor is that the purpose of my electing not to repeat the GBN ad. You brethren must decide whom/what you will use in your programming. I do fear that your use of the brethren I have mentioned above will prevent a number of brethren (me among them) from supporting your plans. Let me be clear: I do not know of any false doctrine taught by the brethren to whom I alluded above (except brother Dave Miller on the staff of Apologetics Press, who is the source of my problem with that organization). However, we teach by our behavior as well as by our tongues, and the aforementioned brethren are teaching the wrong message by associating with certain false teachers in such a way as to endorse them.

Yours for the one faith,

Dub McClish, Editor
THE GOSPEL JOURNAL

On 03/07/05 Barry Gilreath Sr. director and one of the overseeing elders of GBN wrote the following response to Dub McClish and TGJ:

Dub McClish
C/o The Gospel Journal
P.O. Box 219
Cibolo, TX 78108-0219

March 7, 2005

Dear brother McClish:

Thank you for your input on potential speakers of GBN. I would appreciate your sending information on the specific problems you have with the two men you mentioned. We agree that the men used on the television network should be sound in the faith. The eldership at Highland wants to insure, to the best of our ability, that speakers for the network are faithful men. The enclosed questionnaire is required. We would like you to review these questions and give us any additional questions you would recommend.

Let me thank you for the work you do in the kingdom and, especially, for **The Gospel Journal**.

Yours in Christ,
Barry Gilreath, Sr.
Elder and Executive Director, GBN
BGS.jrd

On 03/17/05 Dub McClish, then editor of TGJ, sent his second letter to GBN... as of the date at the bottom of this pamphlet he has received NO answer, nor has TGJ as far as we know. However, since Dub was ousted as Editor of TGJ (07/20/05), GBN has placed another order with TGJ (08/19/05) for three full-page ads to run in consecutive months which was run in the August 2005 edition. Dub's forced exit as Editor of TGJ is directly related to his objections to Dave Miller and his involvement with Apologetics Press. GBN obviously knows this fact. The Northside elders agreed with Dub's assessment (based on the evidence) of both Mack Lyon and Dave Miller. NOTE: Mack Lyon and "In Search of the Lord's Way" recently endorsed "Churches of Christ Disaster Relief" on their website. CCCR is a man made organization set up to do the benevolence work of the church which is unscriptural:

THE GOSPEL JOURNAL

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E-mail: tgj@charter.net
Website: thegospeljournal.org

March 17, 2005

Mr. Barry Gilreath, Sr.
Gospel Broadcast Network
P.O. Box 23604
Chattanooga, TN 37422

Dear brother Gilreath:

Thank you for your recent letter. Since it was sent originally to our Business Office (300 miles from me) instead of to my Editorial/Advertising Office, I received it only yesterday. Let me say first that I appreciate the spirit in which you wrote. I was sincere in my expression of regret (in my e-mail message of 2/26) at not being able to repeat the GBN ad in the pages of the March GOSPEL JOURNAL. (By the way, thank you for your kind comments on this journalistic effort.) In fact, I very much regretted having even to write that message. I want you to understand that I do not consider myself to be in an adversarial position toward GBN, only in an inquiring and reticent one, at present. Because of the factors I have already mentioned (and some additional ones, as I will note later), I simply do not feel that I can at this stage "put all of my weight down" in favor of these plans. (I do not intend to imply that I have much "weight" to put down; the success or failure of your plans surely will not rest on my support or lack of it.) It grieves me sorely even to entertain these reservations, but my conscience at present requires me to

do so. I assure you that I have not mounted any sort of campaign against GBN. I admire the vision of the eldership at Dalton and of other brethren working with you who are launching this project. Although I do not recall having met you or your fellow-elders, I have no reason whatsoever to doubt the nobility and purity of your motives or your soundness in the one faith. All of the principals connected with GBN whom I know, I consider to be faithful brethren.

As I stated in my earlier message, “I do not know of any false doctrine taught by...” either brother Mack Lyon or any of the staff of Apologetics Press (except brother Dave Miller, as I will later specify). Please note carefully that I am not making any accusation that the aforementioned brethren (with the exception noted) have taught, now teach, or will teach any false doctrine—on their respective programs or elsewhere.

Moreover, from what I know of them (I do not know all of the brethren at Apologetics Press personally), I am confident that they will not do so (again, with the exception noted). I also stated in my earlier message wherein my real problem lies with these (and perhaps others) you might contemplate using on the air: “However, we teach by our behavior as well as by our tongues, and the aforementioned brethren are teaching the wrong message by associating with certain false teachers in such a way as to endorse them.”

Thus, the primary issue I raise is not concerning the faithfulness of the men themselves you contemplate using, but with the alliances some of them maintain and the implications of said alliances. Now let me get to some specifics. At the risk of boring you, I reemphasize that I know of no doctrinal errors brother Lyon has ever taught or teaches on the "Search" program. However, I cannot see how his apparent amicable association with some men and institutions that are unsound does not amount to implied endorsement of false doctrine, apostasy, and Change-Agent hermeneutics. The very congregation that hosts the "Search" program (i.e., Edmond, OK, Church of Christ) is the campus church for Oklahoma Christian University. As you may know, OCU owns *The Christian Chronicle*, the major mouthpiece of liberalism in the church. The leadership of the congregation (including its "senior minister," its "staff" of six additional ministers [one female], and at least some elders) is closely allied with OCU and with the *Chronicle*. A case in point is Glover Shipp, one of the present Edmond elders, who, until his recent retirement, was the Senior Editor of the *Chronicle*.

OCU's actions have given faithful brethren increasing concerns in recent years, especially in its immediate (and major) area of influence—Oklahoma and surrounding states. The hiring of Mike O'Neal, Vice Chancellor of Pepperdine University, to be OCU's fifth president in 2002, did not exactly instill confidence in the fidelity of the Board to the Old Paths. (One does not get to be the vice chancellor of a major university by opposing its core credo—theological ecumenism motivated by gross liberalism. “If brother O'Neal could accommodate the apostasy represented by PU on the West Coast, is it not also likely that he would bring to OCU those same blinders toward Change Agency?” some of us mused. Apparently, our musings were not unfounded.)

The 2004 OCU lectureship was so loaded with liberals (including one from Max Lucado's church) that widespread protests from concerned brethren (by the hundreds) occurred. In fact, the vast majority of the slate of speakers was so awful that Mack Lyon himself boycotted the lectureship (for which I have expressed my appreciation, by the way). However, although the school still had several notorious liberals on the lectureship again this year (e.g., Randy Harris, Mark Henderson, Don McLaughlin, Jim McGuiggan, Ronnie Norman), Mack (strangely to several) lifted his boycott and resumed his annual “Search” dinner there. When I inquired about this seemingly contradictory behavior, he told me that some OCU administrators assured him of their plans to do better and that the school was going to issue a public statement to this effect. OCU chose a strange way to implement this policy change in this year's lectureship, as indicated above. No public statement has yet been forthcoming from the school,

concerning which Mack has expressed disappointment in our correspondence. But, it gets worse: One of OCU's graduate religion professors (Glen Pemberton) was exposed last year as a modernist, at least on the subject of Biblical inspiration. The administration (as ACU did almost 20 years ago with its evolutionist biology professor) chose to deny that he taught what he taught (although a student in his class provided a recording of Pemberton's teaching in his own voice) and has defended him.

The connections between the theological direction of the *Chronicle* and OCU are indisputable. Lynn McMillon is both Dean of the OCU College of Biblical Studies and President/CEO of the *Chronicle*. As dean, OCU's Lectureship falls under his oversight. I hardly see how he can attempt to put a conservative face on OCU's lectureship and/or religion department and not do something about the liberal complexion of the *Chronicle* (since he is in charge of both). On the other hand, if he keeps the *Chronicle* on its liberal loving track, he can hardly make any credible claim for moving OCU back to its founders' roots. Brother McMillon's wife, Joy, an Assoc. Ed. of the *Chronicle*, has also been closely connected with OCU at various times (as a teacher in the past and now in other roles). She has demonstrated a strong and open affinity for liberalism. For example, Rubel Shelly has published numerous articles written by her in *Wineskins*. Further, Pepperdine awarded her its Distinguished Christian Service Award at its 2003 Spring Lectureship, citing her for "contributions to Christian education, Christian journalism, and mentoring of Christian young people." (And these ivory-tower academics almost go into "denial shock" when we accuse them of being "liberals." They must take us "ordinary" folk for abject fools!)

The foregoing information demonstrates the close ties the Edmond Church has with extremely liberal institutions nearby (i.e., OCU, the *Chronicle*). These factors make the congregation itself extremely suspect doctrinally. Furthermore, right along with the links on its Website (www.edcofc.org) to the "Search" program are links to OCU and the *Chronicle*, with no disclaimers I could find. Once more, in no way am I accusing—implicitly or explicitly—Mac Lyon of being a liberal. However, as a member of the Edmond Church (sponsor of "Search"), he is (I know not how else to say it) part of a congregation whose leadership endorses, tolerates, and encourages liberal and apostate causes and brethren. Brother Lyon circulates freely among them, and he cannot avoid being in a fellowship relationship with them. He apparently sees no incongruity in having "Search" listed on the same level as OCU and the *Chronicle* on the church's Website. Let me now summarize my problems with brother Lyon: (1) The congregation of which he is a member is closely allied with the liberalism-promoting *Christian Chronicle*. (2) The congregation of which he is a member is closely allied with OCU, whose President and Dean of the College of Biblical Studies apparently either see no problem in providing apostates an audience or are unable to recognize an apostate when they see one. (3) Brother Lyon is therefore a member of a liberal congregation and draws his livelihood from it. (4) Likewise, the "Search" program is sponsored by a congregation that is extremely tolerant of liberalism. Given these facts, although brother Lyon preaches the Truth on the "Search" program, his close relationship with so many negative elements tarnishes his otherwise good influence and reputation and those of the "Search" program. How can anyone work so closely with liberals (especially as brother Lyon does in the Edmond Church) without either being a hypocrite on the one hand or bidding them Godspeed on the other, or perhaps both? Perhaps the more pertinent question you brethren should consider is whether or not any baggage he may bring with him will become baggage for GBN. Others have already expressed to me similar and additional concerns regarding the use of "Search" on GBN.

As indicated above, my objections to the use of men at Apologetics Press are most certainly not aimed at all of those men. I have known Bert Thompson on a first-name and very amicable basis for more than twenty years and have never questioned the soundness of his doctrine. I know of others on the AP staff only by name, but certainly have no reason to question their loyalty to God's Word. The problematic matter with AP relates to its hiring and unqualified endorsement of brother Dave Miller, who joined AP August 1, 2002. Before this time, he worked for several years in various capacities with the Brown Trail Church of Christ, the Brown Trail School of Preaching, and the Brown Trail-sponsored "Truth in Love"

TV program in the area where I have lived for more than thirty years (near Fort Worth, TX). In 1990, as the preacher at Brown Trail, he helped plan and inaugurate the unscriptural "elder reaffirmation" practice there, which procedure the church employed that year (for documentation see my chapter in the Bellview Lectures book, *Leadership*, [Pensacola, FL: Bellview Church of Christ, 1997], pp. 83–103). He has never repented of that, and in fact, did not raise his voice against it when it was employed a second time in 2002, while he still worked there as director of the school. The "reaffirmation" procedures were executed in an effort to quiet serious internal church problems that revolved around brother Miller and brother Everett Chambers (see below), but they only intensified the problems, resulting in the loss of many members in both cases. Additionally, brother Miller (along with the Brown Trail elders and preacher at the time, Maxie Boren) justified an unscriptural and deceptive "marriage" scheme in which one of his students participated.

The student, Everett Chambers, a Jamaican, "married" (i.e., went through the ceremony and signed the marriage certificate) with a female relative who lived in the U.S. as a ploy for obtaining his "green card," allowing him to remain in this country. After achieving his goal by virtue of this "marriage," he promptly had the "marriage" annulled, having never intended to be the woman's actual husband. In spite of this situation, according to some of brother Miller's former associates at Brown Trail (including a former elder and a long-time fulltime instructor in the school), he not only accepted brother Chambers as a student, but later employed him as dean of students. Brother Miller's defense of this practice was that brother Chambers lacked prior "intent" concerning actual marriage, so it did not "count." What a "can of worms" such "reasoning" opens, hardly distinguishable from the Roman Catholic doctrine of "mental reservation." These, along with accusations (from faculty, students, and some of his elders) that brother Miller was extremely dictatorial and intimidating in his role of director eventually so effected the school that it lost all of its fulltime faculty and most of its students. These and related matters also so divided the Brown Trail eldership that three (those who could not agree with brother Miller's behavior) of the seven elders resigned. These matters also led to a division in the congregation, with approximately forty percent of the congregation leaving.

When brother Thompson announced he had employed brother Miller, some (including congregations and individuals) who had knowledge of these matters and who had long supported AP financially, brought these matters to brother Thompson's attention. He refused to consider seriously the evidence of the charges against brother Miller, whereupon these accusing brethren reluctantly ceased their support of AP. Here we see a great irony: Brother Thompson has assumed the very same "deny and defend" posture toward brother Miller and his accusers which brother Thompson found so odious when ACU administrators assumed the same stance in 1986 concerning their evolutionist biology professor and his chief accuser (i.e., brother Thompson). Unless he has done so secretly, brother Miller has not repented of his error on the phony "marriage" he defended or of his active part in the elder "reaffirmation" procedure. The last time I checked, moving 700 miles and/or the passage of time do not assuage the guilt of one's sins or correct one's errors.

I know that men can be maligned and falsely charged. Anyone who has preached the Truth without compromise very long will be on the receiving end of such things somewhere along the way. However, the charges against brother Miller are rather widely and well known, especially in these parts, and are not mere hearsay or fabrications from one or more who have a vendetta. It is regrettable that AP has seemed determined to defend this brother at whatever cost. AP's embracing and defending him with no repentance on his part has tarnished its formerly sterling reputation for some and has given brother Miller credibility that he does not deserve. I admit that I am a bit puzzled as to why brother Miller has not been tapped for airtime on GBN. Surely, among the AP employees he is measurably the most qualified, with likely hundreds of hours of camera time to his credit. Could it be that AP did not offer his services for fear of the immediate protests such would provoke? Your Website indicates that brother Kyle Butt will be the AP staffer with a segment on GBN. I have never met this young man, but his

writings indicate that he is very intelligent and strong in the faith. If you are going to use someone from AP anyway, however, I suggest you go ahead and take advantage of brother Miller's obvious talents and broadcast experience. I fail to see the difference in using brother Miller and in using brother Butt or another man from AP as long as all of the AP fellows treat brother Miller as if he has no doctrinal problems. Therefore, I question the use of someone from AP for about the same reason that I question the use of brother Lyon: In both cases, these brethren work hand in glove with and defend those who have doctrinal clouds over them.

I noticed in one of your newsletters on-line that brother Eddie Parrish and the "Truth in Love" program will also be on the schedule. As with brother Lyon and the AP fellows (except for brother Miller), I know of no doctrinal error that brother Parrish has ever taught or now teaches. Nor do I know of any doctrinal error that has ever been taught on the "Truth in Love" program. He did something a few years ago, however, that made many of us who know him (including some of his close associates) seriously question his judgment, maturity, and knowledge of the Scriptures. He voluntarily wrote brother Mac Deaver a letter, telling him that, while he did not agree with his speculations about the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, he did not believe this issue was one over which fellowship should be severed. Predictably, brother Deaver pounced upon the opportunity to publish said letter in his *Biblical Notes Quarterly* in an effort to bolster his following. This action by brother Parrish shocked many who had formerly esteemed him highly. I do not know if he has changed his views on this subject. I do know that the present Brown Trail eldership has been very tolerant of brother Deaver and of some of his supporters. Brown Trail has thereby been supportive of the dangerous Holy Spirit doctrine brother Deaver has seemed determined to force upon the church the past eight or nine years. As I am sure you know, brother Parrish not only hosts the "Truth in Love" program, but is also the preacher at Brown Trail, as of last summer. This congregation once had an excellent reputation for standing for the Truth and for producing capable and strong preachers. With changes in leadership and personnel over the past fifteen or so years, however, the complexion (and direction) of the congregation has changed considerably. In connection with brother Miller, I mentioned that the church has twice used the elder "reaffirmation" process (invented by and widely used by liberal congregations). These were employed basically to get rid of certain elders, not by proving their lack of Scriptural qualifications, but by tallying a certain percentage of votes cast by the members who chose to participate in the arrangement. While brother Parrish was not employed by Brown Trail when either of these programs was executed, he moved there soon after the last one and was doubtless well familiar with the first one, being a graduate of the school. If he has any problem with what the Brown Trail Church did in either of these "reaffirmations," he has not let anyone around here know it. A few months ago the Brown Trail elders issued an extremely weak, self-justifying "explanation" of their latest employment of this unscriptural scheme, but it was difficult to see any clear-cut repentance or acknowledgement of Scriptural violation in it. This congregation has been such an enigma, to say the least, over the past several years that many faithful brethren, both near and far, have not felt comfortable endorsing it or the school. It is further sad that some who would have supported the "Truth in Love" did not feel that they could and some who once supported it have discontinued doing so because of these factors. While I certainly have nothing personal against brother Parrish (or any of the Brown Trail elders) in any way, their involvement in GBN will undoubtedly turn some brethren off on GBN itself.

I realize that some might argue that to make an issue of those with whom a man associates, when he himself is sound in the faith, is going too far. I believe it is a vital and valid issue, however. We indicate the strength of our convictions by our behavior as well as by our words. Our behavior is likely the stronger and more accurate indicator, in fact. When we extend our fellowship and tacit approval to men or institutions that have gone astray, we become partakers of their sins (2 John 10–11). We must decide at which degree of compromise we must stop. The situation regarding brother Lyon illustrates these various degrees: If I know Mack Lyon, he would not think of endorsing such men as Randy Harris or Mark Henderson. Yet OCU and the *Chronicle* editors and reporters have no problem with these men. As

I mentioned earlier, the Edmond Church is closely allied with OCU and the *Chronicle*. Mack Lyon is a member of the Edmond Church (sponsor of “Search” and of brother Lyon). Thus, while brother Lyon professes to utterly oppose liberalism, in practice he is endorsing it through the aforementioned links that take him to some of the most blatant apostates among us. It appears to me that if GBN uses him, it will be in the position of encouraging in deed that which it opposes in word— just one more link removed. I believe the same fellowship/endorsement principle applies in the circumstances involving the use of men from AP and brother Parrish.

I appreciate your enclosing the copy of the questionnaire that all proposed speakers on the program must complete, and complete satisfactorily. I read all of it, and the questions are well-worded and to the point. I applaud the Highland elders for taking this necessary measure. Since you asked for any suggestions of additional questions I might have, I offer the following for your consideration:

1. Check each school below that you would NOT recommend to Christian parents for their children’s undergraduate college education:

- Pepperdine University
- Abilene Christian University
- Lipscomb University
- Harding University
- Oklahoma Christian University
- Freed-Hardeman University
- Faulkner University
- Rochester College (formerly Michigan Christian College)
- Heritage Christian University (Florence, AL)
- Harding Graduate School of Religion
- Southern Christian University

Explain why you answered as you did

2. Would it be sinful to have spiritual fellowship with those who openly support liberals and apostates in the church, even though one did not agree with said liberalism or apostasy?

Yes ___ No ___ Not sure ___

3. Would it be sinful for a congregation to implement the elder “reaffirmation-reconfirmation” procedure?

Yes ___ No ___ Not sure ___

4. Would it be sinful to have spiritual fellowship with one who has taught and still holds that the “reaffirmation-reconfirmation” of elders is Scripturally authorized, although the one in error is otherwise doctrinally sound?

Yes ___ No ___ Not sure ___

5. Would it be sinful to dissolve a marriage on grounds of a prior “lack of intent” to actually be married?

Yes ___ No ___ Not sure ___

6. Would it be sinful to have spiritual fellowship with one who has taught and still holds that one may Scripturally dissolve a marriage on grounds of a prior “lack of intent,” although the one in error is otherwise doctrinally sound?

Yes ___ No ___ Not sure ___

7. Do you consider yourself to be in fellowship with such Change Agents in the church as Rubel Shelly, Carroll Osburn, Royce Money, Alton Howard, Lynn Anderson, Steve Flatt, Mike Cope, Douglas Foster, Marvin Phillips, Joe Beam, Rick Atchley, Randy Harris, and F. LaGard Smith?

Yes___ No___ Not sure___

8. Is the annual “Tulsa Soul-Winning Workshop” in Tulsa, OK, a good work that builds up the kingdom?

Yes___ No___ Not sure___

9. Does the Holy Spirit directly or immediately—in addition to His Word—provide strength and wisdom for Christians?

Yes___ No___ Not sure___

10. Does the Holy Spirit directly or immediately—in addition to His Word—enable Christians to bear spiritual fruit?

Yes___ No___ Not sure___

I have one other question relating to GBN involving somewhat of a practical problem: When people respond to the broadcasts, will they be referred to the nearest group that has “Church of Christ” on its building, regardless of the congregation’s soundness or lack thereof? Will there be some mechanism in place to direct them to a faithful congregation and/or will faithful congregations be put in touch with such inquiring individuals? I realize that it will be humanly impossible to do such follow-up work perfectly, and that in many cases people will respond (I trust) where no congregation even exists. Will GBN follow up on such contacts through the mail or by other means? Will GBN solicit and/or accept funds from liberal congregations? If such contributions are accepted, will GBN feel an obligation to send respondents to contributing liberal congregations?

I apologize for writing at such length. I would not have been so verbose, but I wanted you to know not only that my concerns are real about some of your planned programming, but also the reasons and rationale for those concerns. The task you brethren have undertaken is a daunting one. I can only imagine all of the details you are having to work through in the start-up process. I know that you are seeking programming sufficient to fill all of those hours and days that will constitute 24/7 airtime. I pray that you will not lower the standards one iota in order to do so. It would be far better to have some “down time” than to fill the time with questionable programming. Thank you for considering my questions, concerns, and suggestions.

Yours in the one faith,

s/Dub McClish
Dub McClish, Editor
THE GOSPEL JOURNAL

ITEM #6

On 08/05/05 the Northside elders sent our first letter to the Highland elders (overseers of GBN) regarding the AP endorsement. This letter was sent because one of their elders (Barry Gilreath, Jr.) was scheduled to speak on our 2005 lectureship which was dealing with “church discipline”. We believe the action by the GBN brethren was in contrast with what the Bible teaches about church discipline and fellowshiping those who have been withdrawn from. We therefore requested a response as to the elderships position regarding this endorsement.

August 5, 2005

The Elders
Highland church of Christ
901 Chester Street
Dalton, GA. 30721

Dear Brethren

We are confident that the Highland Elders are aware of the massive division that is now underway and on the rapid increase. No doubt this is the greatest division to take place in the lifetime of any of us today. It is taking place among those whom both the Highland and Northside elders and congregations have loved and respected for their soundness in the faith. The splitting to which we refer is the one instigated by the Apologetics Press scandal and the appointing of Dave Miller as the new director.

We have received a statement of support for Apologetics Press signed by sixty brethren. Apparently it may be the case that this support statement was signed by some brethren who were not aware of the AP scandal nor the appointment of Dave Miller as AP director who has been publicly marked as teaching false doctrine regarding MDR and elder-reaffirmation. Among the names appearing on the statement of support were Barry Gilreath and Jim Dearman.

The statement asserts:

"We, the undersigned, wish to announce that we have complete confidence that Apologetics Press is on a firm footing that will insure its continued work of excellence. We commend AP to the brotherhood and recommend that it be the recipient of financial and moral support."

We believe the evidence clearly shows Dave Miller to be a false teacher and AP in violation of 2John by extending fellowship to him. Since you brethren have already been made aware of the controversy surrounding Dave Miller and his being marked and withdrawn from by faithful brethren and in light of the fact that AP has welcomed him into their fellowship, we were perplexed to see the names of brother Gilreath and Dearman on this list.

Brethren we must uphold God's law on fellowship as it pertains to discipline. Our question is whether or not this endorsement of AP is the consensus of the entire Highland eldership?

We kindly request your immediate response. We are also willing to meet with you to discuss this matter.

Northside Elders

Bobby Hall
Ron Hall
Terry York

On 08/14/05 the Northside elders received the first reply (dated 8/10/05) from the Highland elders responding to the letter we sent them regarding the AP endorsement:

August 10th, 2005

Dear brethren,

We have received your inquiry. You have asked for a prompt response. We will provide such.

Please do not infer from the commendation letter of AP that any endorsement of brother Dave Miller is implied. He has also spoken on some sound lectureships with good brethren. Their appearance with him doesn't necessarily imply an endorsement of him. These matters are being addressed.

We are aware of the issues that have been raised and are planning a meeting to discuss such with him. There are some legitimate concerns, though we have heard that he no longer holds the positions he once held regarding MDR and elder affirmation. We do believe that if he no longer holds these views a public acknowledgment would be appropriate. We will be addressing this matter with him in the near future. We had planned to do such prior to your letter.

As far as brother Thompson is concerned, he has repented. There is no issue here as far as we can see. Furthermore, brother Thompson is no longer associated with AP. In fact it was overseeing eldership, brother Miller and the AP staff that initiated the discussions that led to his dismissal. We believe that AP is a needed work, and we pray that the matter regarding brother Miller will also soon be corrected.

In His Service,

The Highland elders

Barry Gilreath Sr.
Skip McNutt
Jimmy Wood
Bob Moreau
Barry Gilreath Jr.

On 08/19/05 the Northside elders sent a second letter to the Highland elders responding to some concerns we had with their first letter regarding the AP endorsement and Dave Miller:

August 19, 2005

Elders
Highland church of Christ
901 Chester Street
Dalton, GA. 30721

Dear Brethren,

We received your letter dated August 10th, 2005; we appreciate your quick response. We were glad to see you too had concern over the controversy surrounding Dave Miller. The evidence as to his teaching and practicing error on MDR and elder revaluation/reaffirmation is overwhelming. We have heard also that Miller has changed his mind about his position on MDR and R/R of elders. Brother Miller's supposed rejection of those errors has never been published and he needs to do so before he can be received. Of course you are aware of our personal dealings with Dave Miller when he endorsed the apostate Calhoun church in October 1999 after he had received evidence showing their doctrinal error some six months in advance of his scheduled meeting with them.

We want you to know that our initial query about the AP endorsement had nothing to do with Bert Thompson and his removal from AP. Our prayer is that brother Thompson can get the help he will need to overcome years of pedophilia and that his young victims can heal from the emotional damage they have as a result of his sins. We pray for Bert's family and all those who have been hurt by his sins.

We would not want to leave the impression however that we believe Bert had nothing to do with the current controversy surrounding AP and Miller. The facts are clear that Thompson knew about Miller's doctrinal problems before he made his astonishing decision to hire him. Thompson replied to the Miller objections that he received from contributors with an irrational denial of the evidence offered in an attempt to give an unqualified defense of Miller. Many contributors withdrew their support as a result of Miller's appointment.

While we certainly agree with you that AP provides a vital service to the brotherhood and should continue to exist for the good it renders, we do not agree that we should endorse any organization that supports, promotes and has as their director a false teacher. We are concerned with your response as it relates to why brother Gilreath and Dearman signed the AP endorsement letter. You stated in your letter "Please do not infer from the commendation letter of AP that any endorsement of brother Dave Miller is implied". We cannot understand how any of the sixty men who knowingly were aware of the controversy surrounding Miller could give AP their endorsement considering the evidence. The AP endorsements became even more hypocritical when it was discovered Dave Miller made the phone calls to many of those men who signed "his" AP endorsement letter requesting their support personally. We do not know if Miller approached brothers Gilreath or Dearman personally but we do know those who were personally contacted by Miller per their own admission. Our objective in raising this concern is simply to know if you brethren believe one can make a distinction between Dave Miller as director of AP and the organization AP that he now directs. We don't believe you can endorse AP and not endorse Miller there is no middle ground.

On June 10, 2005, brother Michael Hatcher (Now Former Secretary of TGJ Board) responded to the AP “Statement of Support” and to the letters the PBLCOC and AP mailed requesting continued financial support by writing the following statement and sending it to the elders of the PBLCOC.

Apologetics Press has been a great work which needs to continue. However, it must have the right people associated with it to be worthy of faithful brethren’s support. When Apologetics Press began, I supported it a little bit financially and also by prayers and encouragement. This support continued until Bert Thompson hired Dave Miller. It has been documented that brother Miller teaches the false doctrine of reevaluation - reaffirmation of elders (which destroys any oversight the eldership might possess) and that he teaches error regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage (that one can claim there was no intent of marriage for the correct reason and, therefore, God did not join the two in a Matthew 19:6 marriage; thus, following a civil divorce, either party is free to remarry with God’s approval). Because of Dave Miller being associated with Apologetics Press, I, unfortunately, had to end my support of this good work. As long as brother Miller holds these positions and does not repent for publicly teaching and practicing them, faithful brethren should not support a work which is good within itself. It is my prayer that brother Miller will repent of his false doctrines which he has taught, but if not that he will be removed from Apologetics Press.

Concerning brother Miller’s speaking on lectureships with good brethren and that their appearance with him doesn’t necessarily imply an endorsement of him, we believe Romans 16:17-18; Eph 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:6; 2 John teach us how we are to deal with a false teacher. Brother Michael Hatcher wrote the following article in the August 2005 Defender which further addresses this issue.

“...The sad fact remains that some today do not deal with God’s Word faithfully. We all know of the rank liberals in the church today who do not hold to the Word (e.g., Rubel Shelly, Jeff Walling, Randy Harris, Max Lucado, et al.). However, perhaps even more worrisome to me are those in the church who are generally considered to be *sound*, but who teach false doctrines and concerning whom very few seem to care. Otherwise faithful brethren continue to use these men on their lecture programs, and many will even defend these men. For example, brethren continue to use a brother who teaches a doctrine which destroys the authority of the eldership (i.e., congregational reevaluation and reconfirmation of the elders, requiring each elder to get a certain percentage of congregational votes or be removed). Further, the same brother advocates that a foreign citizen can marry an American citizen for the purpose of defrauding the American government and getting into the United States, divorce that person, and still have the right to marry because supposedly he never had the “intent” to be married (actually, he did have the intent to be “married,” even though his motive and purpose for the “marriage” were fraudulent). Yet, many faithful brethren simply ignore the false doctrines of this brother. Why do faithful Gospel preachers continue to appear on lectureships with one who teaches such damning doctrines? If Mac Deaver was to appear on those programs, they would refuse to speak on them—and rightly so, yet they will not do so with one who teaches such doctrines as noted above. Why, brethren? Not only would these brethren not speak on a program with brother Deaver, they also would not support any organization of which brother Deaver is a part. Why then will faithful brethren support organizations that employ and promote men who hold such doctrines as those described above?

God told Moses that this prophet of whom he spoke would speak what the Father commanded Him. We should do no less today. Those who speak other things need to be held accountable for those false teachings, and unless and until they repent of them, they

should not be used by faithful brethren. They certainly should not be promoted and encouraged (2 John 9-11)”.

As you brethren are well aware the liberals are making a mockery of Biblical fellowship and are substituting “unity in diversity” in its place. Most brethren no longer practice church discipline. They have no respect for God’s word when it comes to this command whether it is in practicing discipline or honoring it. AP is in violation of 2 John by fellowshiping and giving God’s speed to Miller. All those who fellowship Miller including those who work with AP are in violation of God’s law on fellowship. We feel sure that those who are involved with AP are now aware of the controversy surrounding Miller. Therefore, we believe to endorse AP and not Miller is inconsistent.

This apparent inconsistency on your part causes us concern because of our upcoming lectureship. This year our subject is dealing with all aspects of church discipline. AP’s fellowship of Miller is at the very heart of the effect that liberalism is having on church discipline. We love you brethren and hope you can see why we have a concern with your response. We are writing you again about this matter, hopefully, to help you see that the present conflict concerning Dave Miller is inseparable from the AP endorsement. Participation with their debacle stands in stark contrast with God’s law on fellowship.

Brethren we consider you as friends of truth, therefore, a friend of the entire congregation at Northside. We are your friends, not your enemy. We do not intend for that to change. However, for the sake of being consistent, especially in light of the theme of our lectureship and the involvement of Barry Gilreath, Jr. as one of our speakers, we kindly request your honest consideration of those things we have presented. We want you to be a part of this spiritual feast and enjoy this period of fellowship with us. We kindly await your response.

In His Service,

Elders

Bobby Hall

Ron Hall

Terry York

On 09/06/05 since the Northside elders had not received a response from Highland concerning our second letter we contacted Barry Gilreath Jr. and was able to confirm Highland’s decision to uphold GBN’s endorsement of AP/Miller. The following letter was sent to brother Barry Gilreath Jr. and the Highland elders rescinding Barry’s invitation to our lectureship.

September 7, 2005

Brother Barry Gilreath Jr.

Due to the development of the Dave Miller/AP incident, we find it necessary to make some changes in our Fourth Annual Northside lectureship. The reason being, Dave Miller has been clearly identified/marked as a false teacher regarding elder R/R, MDR and fellowshiping an apostate congregation. This marking was done by faithful brethren as the Bible instructs one to do (Rom. 16:17). The documentation verifying his error is still in abundant supply. Contrary to Miller’s claim that “no one came to him and spoke to him personally before writing him up”... names are available of those who have done so. Miller's error has also been established in the mouth of two or three witnesses. The best evidence available is found in his own words (see the enclosed transcription of

his sermon in the August edition of *CFTF* preached at Brown Trail on April 8, 1990). It was then told to the church in compliance with Jesus' command (Mat. 18:15-17).

The tremendous rupture that now exists among sound brethren in the Lord's church could be remedied immediately if Dave Miller would make his repentance as public as the sin is known. Instead of questioning faithful witnesses and investigating documentation some are taking Miller's testimony alone and disregarding the proof of faithful brethren.

The theme of our lectureship "Caring Enough to Correct" emphasizes the need for all faithful Christians to honor the practice of church discipline that sometimes and unfortunately involves withdrawal of fellowship. When withdrawal of fellowship is scripturally enacted we must withhold our fellowship. When we refuse to do this we become a partaker of their evil deeds.

Because of the decision of the Highland elders to endorse Apologetics Press, with Dave Miller's involvement in that organization, we regrettably have decided to rescind your invitation to speak on our upcoming lectureship. It would obviously be inconsistent for us to have one speak on our lectures who fully endorses an organization whose new director is a man who has been scripturally marked and withdrawn from. Barry, we love you as a dear brother and deeply grieve over having to make this decision. We hope and pray that you and the Highland eldership will consider the things we have presented concerning this serious issue. If it would benefit the Highland elders to meet with us and other brethren during our lectureship to discuss this issue we would welcome the opportunity. Let us know if you would like to meet in this way and we will make the arrangements.

In His Service

Elders

Bobby Hall
Ron Hall
Terry York

On 09/09/05 we received the following letter from brother Barry Gilreath, Jr. responding to our phone conversation with him on 9/06/05 rescinding his invitation to speak on our lectureship for reasons noted above:

September 7, 2005

Dear brethren,

I am very disappointed that you have withdrawn your invitation for me to be a part of your lectureship program. It is sad to me that a participant's endorsement of a mission work such as AP has become the pivotal test of faithfulness by those I have long considered to be Highland's closest friends.

The response that the Northside elders have taken in this matter is extremely unfortunate and altogether unnecessary. In my phone conversation with brother York, I understood that your withdrawal of an invitation to speak was not to be confused with a withdrawal of fellowship from Highland or me personally. I strongly disagree with such a conclusion. What else would the Northside elders have to do to initiate such? You have in previous letters argued that a church doesn't have to publicly mark or send a letter of withdrawal for such to exist. How is such a conclusion any different than the present course of action you have chosen in regard to Highland or myself? In previous correspondences you have implied that the Highland church is holding hands with the change agents, hiring unfaithful brethren to serve in our mission works, accused us of violating God's laws of fellowship, and you have made it known that you will not support our evangelistic efforts because of issues of fellowship. Now you have

canceled my appearance on your lectureship. Anyway you cut it, *that is certainly a withdrawal of fellowship*. You may not have done such in word, but truly you have done such in deed. You argued in one previous letter that fellowship was “joint participation”. What joint participation are we left with, now that the elders pursued this path? This breaks my heart to know that brethren whom I have loved and supported for so long would resort to such hasty and unnecessary action towards a church such as Highland.

For the record, may it be understood by all at Highland, Northside or anywhere else that this was NOT an action taken by the Highland church or her eldership. We did NOT initiate these discussions. We had NO interest in pursuing paths that we feared from the outset would only divide and alienate our congregations at such a sensitive time in the brotherhood. We weren't looking for any fuss with a dear sister in Christ and have turned the other cheek time and time again to avoid such an end. I cannot comprehend what it is that the Northside elders had hoped to attain in forcing such an issue in such a public fashion at such a sensitive time. The matter involving Dave Miller and AP is still being discussed and considered by many brethren in the church. Just because we do not share your conclusions at this time was no justification to escalate these matters. We have had discussions with you to consider your concerns and with Dave Miller personally, which by the way, was the least you should have done before casting judgment. All we had wanted was for you to speak with brother Miller first so you could give him a fair hearing prior to casting judgment. Yet as of the time of brother York's call to cancel my speaking engagement, no action had been taken by the Northside elders to contact Dave Miller to clarify or provide further explanation of any charges you were bring forth.

Such strong of a response by Northside elders can only lead me to assume that you will also no longer use the faculty members of the Memphis school of Preaching such as brother Cates, Liddel and others who do not share your present views concerning AP? Brethren, do you not see that you are slowly and systematically narrowing your circle of influence and fellowship, by your hasty pursuit to jump in line with certain other brethren, who have determined to rush to judgment and mark off a large segment of the church? This is very sad to me, because the Northside congregation has so many wonderful attributes to offer in the Kingdom of God. Yet perhaps before you continue in the course of drawing lines, you might come to agreement as to the standard that will be used *and then use it consistently*. I do not understand why it is a NON-issue for a brother to have a different view than the Northside elders on women translators, receiving support for mission works, or remarriage (as brother David Smith affirmed at White Oak), and that fellowship can continue to exist. Yet in this specific matter, for some unknown reason to me, if an eldership or brother endorses AP, you draw a bold line. What basis do you dismiss these issues and rally around an endorsement of AP? It is disheartening that an eldership such as the one at Highland, who is composed of good brethren who have been a support to you from your very existence, yet who has differed from your conclusions at this time regarding the endorsement of a work that has been a treasure to the church, has become an issue that demands the action you have taken. Especially in light of the fact that there are many *good brethren* who have taken the time to meet with brother Miller and do not share your conclusions, and too, in light of the fact that you yourselves still have some homework to do with brother Miller personally.

It is sad to me that brethren across the country are marking one another, withdrawing invitations to speak and canceling speaking engagements over which camp some brother falls into concerning AP. It is sad that good brethren are circling the wagon over AP, and that the arrows that are flying are not being aimed at the Indians, but at your fellow brothers in Christ – good brothers, mind you, who have stood toe and side by side for many years.

Good brethren have always differed in certain matters, yet they have not allowed such to escalate into issues of division. I would dare say that there are probably some differences even between the Northside elders, as there is obviously between you and your fine evangelist regarding the issue that

arose at White Oak. My question is, are you prepared to consistently continue in such a path? Will you consistently draw other necessary lines? If you withdraw in word or deed from every church or brother that presently endorses AP at this juncture in time, would consistency not demand that you do the same with every brother or church that fellowship those who endorse AP? Will you withdraw in word or deed from every preacher who has appeared on a program with Dave Miller and has not set forth in his public presentation to “expose” him? If not, why not? I found it very interesting that although my appearance was canceled, brother Clarke, who is appearing with Dave Miller the very night before your lectureship begins, has not been canceled. Is it simply because brother Clarke is still considering the issue at hand? The Highland elders are also open to such considerations. We had only wanted you to meet with brother Miller personally prior to our further discussions. We did not think that was too much to ask.

I hope that during your lectureship on fellowship, some brother will stress the importance of fairness, consistency, patience and meekness in handling differences with good brethren. In my judgment, there has been very little of such demonstrated in this matter. I hope that at some point during your lectureship, you will look around the room and be reminded of the fellowship you have indeed withdrawn from the Highland church and her leaders in deed, if not in word. I pray that you have studied the issue at hand backwards and forwards, because as a leaders and teachers of such things, and as men who have taken such a strong action in this matter as you have, the Lord will hold you more accountable (James 3:11).

In His Service,

Barry Gilreath, Jr.

On 09/10/05 we received the second letter from the Highland elders explaining their endorsement of Dave Miller.

September 4, 2005

Dear brethren,

We would encourage all parties involved in these discussions to take a deep breath and proceed with great caution and patience. It is sad to us that brethren throughout the brotherhood, who have been the best of friends, and who have been long time supporters of one another and the truth of the Gospel, would so quickly allow certain matters to spiral into drawing lines in the sand.

We would *strongly* urge the Northside elders to arrange a meeting with brother Miller to discuss any concerns that you have. We are not asking you to do anything that we ourselves have not already done. We had some questions and they were given directly to him. A transcript alone can't always answer every question. Even in studying the scriptures, you would recognize that context can have a bearing upon interpretation. To ignore the context is to ignore the intent of the author. The same is true in any discussion. In the matter involving Dave Miller there is also a context that is of importance. We considered the objections that were raised and the context of the matter. He answered all of our questions to our satisfaction. This is not to say that we endorsed every decision that has been made. We do believe that there were some poor judgments made in handling certain matters, but based upon our knowledge of all the facts, we do not believe that such should rise to the level of withholding fellowship from brother Miller or congregations who use him.

If and when the Northside elders have met with brother Miller, we would be happy to meet with you, if you so desire. If you are unwilling to arrange such a meeting with him and carry your concerns directly to him, we do not believe that it would be appropriate to continue to escalate these discussions between Highland and Northside. We would encourage you to arm yourselves with *all facts* being mindful that there are two sides to every story. In order to appropriately apply biblical teaching, we must make sure that we have complete understanding of the issue at hand, having given both sides a fair hearing. Simply reading what some other brother has written or said regarding brother Miller or receiving a transcript of a conversation, doesn't meet the criteria of a fair and impartial hearing. Even in a trial a defendant has the opportunity to give witness. Brother Miller has been willing to do such for anyone who was interested enough to give him a fair hearing. It is beyond our comprehension as to why some would think that so many good and faithful brethren would be willing to sell their soul in a compromise. Have you stopped to consider that maybe these brethren have not compromised, but have actually gone to the source to clarify and have had their questions answered satisfactory? We have. Will you also before you cast judgment upon a large segment of the church?

We certainly understand the position that you are in regarding your lectureship. Perhaps it may be your desire to cancel brother Barry's appearing at Northside or others such brother Clarke who is speaking on a program with brother Miller the night prior to your lectureship beginning. We again ask that you proceed with great caution and patience. Nevertheless, you are autonomous and you will do as you see fit.

The Elders

Barry Gilreath, Jr.
Bob Moreau
Barry Gilreath, Sr.
Jimmy Woods
Skip McNutt

On 09/11/05 the Northside elders responded to the second Highland letter about some questions that were raised in their response:

September 11, 2005

Highland elders

Dear Barry,

In the interest of time we have decided to email you with our response to the Highland elder's last letter that we received yesterday 9/10/05. We plan to meet with Dave Miller this week if it can be arranged and discuss the controversy surrounding him. Before we meet we would like to ask for the following information:

- (1) In your letter dated 9/04/05 (from the Highland elders) you said, "*We had some questions and they were given directly to him*". If the Highland elders do not object we would like to have a copy of those questions so we can address them in our meeting with brother Miller.
- (2) You also said, "*This is not to say that we endorsed every decision that has been made.*" Could you elaborate on this statement?

- (3) And finally you said, “*We do believe that there were some poor judgments made in handling certain matters*”. Could you tell us what those “*poor judgments*” and “*certain matters*” are so we can better understand your decision to now be in full fellowship with brother Miller in light of the evidence.

If you could share this information with us before we meet with Miller we believe it will make our meeting more productive.

One more request. In your letter you said, “*We would encourage you to arm yourselves with all facts being mindful that there are two sides to every story.*” To that we whole heartily agree. With that said, would the Highland elders be willing to meeting with us on Thursday Night (9/15/05) after our lectureship with some of the men on the other side if this issue? The opportunity to sit down with brothers McClish, Hatcher, Watson, Simons and Bailey could not be better since they all will be here for our lectureship on Thursday evening.

We kindly appreciate your quick response.

In His service,

Bobby Hall
Ron Hall
Terry York

On 09/15/05 received the third response for the Highland elders responding to our request for the questions they asked Dave Miller and our invitation extended to them for a meeting with those on the other side of the Miller controversy:

September 13, 2005

Dear brethren,

We have determined that we will no longer continue in the exchange of letters over this matter. Certainly, we are willing to discuss any of your concerns, but we do not believe that the letter writing has brought us any closer to rectifying a matter that truly can only be corrected through personal discussions with brother Miller himself. We choose not to participate in a process whereby brother Miller is bypassed by the Northside elders. We do not believe that trying to solve this matter without going to the source is not a means in which the Lord would be pleased.

We are thankful that you indicated in your most recent letter that you have now determined to talk to him to clarify matters. This is what we set out to do, even before our discussions with Northside began. There were some concerns that we had based upon what we had heard and read, and we determined to handle this matter in accordance with the Golden Rule – Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. We have addressed concerns with brother Miller personally and he has clarified matters and answered our questions. He indicated that he was willing to do such with anyone who would ask. We found him to be very cooperative and asked that the Northside elders speak to him before we continued further in discussions. We were very disappointed that the response from the Northside elders was to withdraw from the Highland church and her leaders in deed, if not in word. This action was counterproductive to repairing and building our relationship that has been damaged by unnecessary accusations.

We are certainly willing to revisit this issue again with the Northside elders, pending that you are willing to meet with brother Miller, and then we will participate in further discussions face-to-face. But we can see no value into entering new discussions with brethren who have not been privy to our prior discussions, some who perhaps haven't spoken to brother Miller directly, and may not have been involved in the situation involving Brown Trail. We could just as easily ask brethren to participate in that discussion who have come to other conclusions such as brother Chesser, Cates, Liddell, McDade, Highers, Jackson, Holland, Pharr, Sain, Taylor and many others, but we cannot see how that would benefit Northside or Highland. It seems to us that the first step would be for the Northside elders to meet with Miller and to clarify the matters at hand as we have done. In light of your lectureship on fellowship and withdrawal, it would indeed be the appropriate thing for you to do. Furthermore, we encourage you to follow the same approach with brother Dedmond, whom you have charged with unfaithfulness, but would not provide us with the charges.

We are encouraged to learn that you have decided to indeed set up a meeting with brother Miller. If and when such a meeting occurs, we will be happy to revisit this issue again. We know that others are working toward the same goal we have in order to help bring this matter to a conclusion.

For The Elders

Barry Gilreath, Jr.

P.S. The elders were unable to meet to sign this letter on such short notice, but it has been written with their input and approval and in keeping with your request for a prompt response.

ITEM #7

The Northside elders were also concerned about Michael Hatcher's apparent endorsement of AP. In order to be consistence we wrote the following correspondence to Michael Hatcher.

On 08/10/05 the Northside elders wrote the following letter, sent by e-mail, to Michael Hatcher:

From: church of Christ Northside
Sent: Wednesday, August 10, 2005 8:45 AM
To: Michael Hatcher
Cc: Bobby E Hall; Ron Hall; Terry York; David B Smith
Subject: AP/Miller/TGJ Board Issue

Michael,

We have attached a letter to you concerning the issues surrounding the aftermath of the AP tragedy and your involvement. We would appreciate your response at your earliest convenience.

In His Service Contending For The Faith,
Bobby Hall
Ron Hall
Terry York

The Letter Attachment

August 10, 2005

Michael Hatcher
4850 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola, FL 32526

Michael,

After reading and rereading material concerning The Gospel Journal episode, we believe we have a much clearer understanding of what took place. As you and Terry York discussed in a phone call he made to you, there is no sin in making a judgment call in a particular matter, even if it is a poor call. But, after learning why Dub McClish and David Watson "resigned" we are convinced that there is much more involved than just a poor judgment call. It is obvious that there was a pre-calculated maneuver in place to back Dub and David into a corner where their only way of escape was either to endorse AP (thus endorsing Dave Miller) or to resign. Dub and Dave's integrity made the outcome of TGJ board conspiracy very predictable, knowing that neither of them would compromise on the issue at hand.

What "the mother of all Boards" ,as it has been labeled, did on that occasion was not only to offer Dub's head to Frank Chesser on a platter; but the Boards decision to endorse AP and force Dub and David to resign brought THEIR heads to Dave Miller and those who uphold him as well. The only thing that is

still unclear to us is who it was that "danced" before them?

Michael, on June 10 you wrote the following statement, "...***Because of Dave Miller being associated with Apologetics Press, I, unfortunately, had to end my support of this good work. As long as brother Miller holds these positions and does not repent for publicly teaching and practicing them, faithful brethren should not support a work which is good within itself. It is my prayer that brother Miller will repent of his false doctrines which he [h]as taught, but if not that he will be removed from Apologetics Press.***" On July 20 brother McClish and Watson said you made the following statement to them during TGJ Board meeting, "***Brother Hatcher, like brother Cates, stated that he would support AP but that he would not support brother Miller.***" This conflicting statement of your "non-endorsement" of AP on July 10 and then your apparent "endorsement" of AP on July 20 causes us great concern.

Michael you may be asking what all of this has to do with Northside. Well, it affects us in at least a couple of ways.

(One) Dub and the Northside elders have been engaged in a battle together for the last several months. Because of Dub's "forced resignation" it placed him into the public arena in a negative way and because of what is being said about him has cast serious doubt about his character and credibility when dealing with liberalism. The decision you and TGJ Board made has now jeopardized our influence and ability to continue to effectively wage this battle and get the results we were seeking.

(Two) This conflict is inseparable from the Dave Miller, AP fiasco as it relates to church discipline and fellowship. The liberals are making a mockery of church discipline. They have no respect for God's word when it comes to this command whether it be rendering discipline or honoring it. AP is in violation of 2 John in fellowshiping and giving God's speed to Miller. All those who fellowship Miller including those who work with AP are in violation of God's law on fellowship assuming they are aware of his being a false teacher by now. To endorse AP and not Miller is inconsistency gone to seed. This apparent inconsistency on your part causes us concern because of our upcoming lectureship. Our theme is dealing with all aspects of church discipline. AP's fellowship of Miller is at the very heart of "the effect that liberalism is having on discipline".

There are signatures of sixty "big men" in the brotherhood who have signed a "statement of support" which reads:

*We, the undersigned, wish to announce that we have complete confidence that Apologetics Press **IS ON A FIRM FOOTING** (emphasis ours) that will insure its continued work of excellence. **We commend AP to the brotherhood and recommend that it continue to be the recipient of financial and moral support.** (emphasis ours)*

- Michael, would you now sign this "statement of support" affirming that AP is on a firm footing and worthy of our financial and moral support?
- Would you recommend AP at all with Dave Miller as its director?
- Do you believe one can separate AP from its director?
- Would you sign a statement saying you cannot recommend or endorse AP as long as Dave Miller is the director?

Our objective in asking these questions is simply to know if you believe one can make a distinction between Dave Miller as director of AP and the organization AP that he now directs.

Michael we consider you a friend of truth, therefore a friend of the elders and the entire congregation at Northside. We are your friend, not your enemy. We do not intend for that to change regardless of how you answer the above questions. However for the sake of consistency, especially in light of the theme of our lectureship and your involvement we kindly request your immediate response.

Elders

Bobby Hall
Ron Hall
Terry York

On 08/10/05 Michael Hatcher wrote the following response:

From: [Michael Hatcher](#)
To: ['Ron Hall'](#) ; mhatcher@gmail.com
Cc: ['Bobby E Hall'](#) ; ['Ron Hall'](#) ; ['Terry York'](#) ; ['David B Smith'](#)
Sent: Wednesday, August 10, 2005 4:36 PM
Subject: RE: AP/Miller/TGJ Board Issue

Beloved brethren,

I am so sorry that my actions have caused you brethren difficulty and cause for concern. I know the stand you have taken through the years and have greatly appreciated you for it. I would not want to cause you brethren, nor the lectureship there any problems whatsoever. The lectures there have been a wonderful beacon of light in the brotherhood and it is certainly my desire for that to continue.

As to your specific questions:

Would I sign that statement of support which sixty brethren signed? Absolutely not!

Would I recommend AP at all with Dave Miller as its director? Absolutely not! (Nor could I recommend it with Dave Miller associated with it.)

Do I believe that one can separate AP from its director? No.

Would I sign a statement saying I cannot recommend or endorse AP as long as Dave Miller is the director? Yes (but again would also say as long as Dave Miller has any part of AP).

What I believe is exactly the same as it was in that which I sent out on June 10. It has always been that and remains that view.

As to the statement in the board meeting mentioned by brothers McClish and Watson and my statement saying I would support AP. I believe AP is a good work. It has produced needed material for brethren. It is my desire to see AP continue as I believe it is needed. When I said I would not support brother Miller (as he is a false teacher), in my mind that includes anything of which he is associated. I will admit not explaining myself fully in the board meeting, but I thought everyone knew me well enough to know that has always been my position, especially in light of what I had already written on June 10. If Dave Miller repents or if he is removed from AP, then yes, I do support AP, but Dave Miller cannot be supported by faithful brethren, thus those works of which he is a part cannot be supported.

I am attaching a PDF of the August issue of "Defender." My editorial was written while I was still a board member of *The Gospel Journal* (but edited some after my resignation, but only minor changes).

The views expressed therein have always been my position and remain such.

Brethren, I want you to know how much I love you and that I would not want to harm your work and your lectureship in any way. If you believe that my being on the lectureship will do any harm, or cause you any problems, please let me know and I will step aside for someone else. While I would hate not to be with you, see you, and participate on the lectureship, I would rather that than to harm you or the lectures there.

Michael Hatcher

On 08/10/05 5:47 the Northside elders wrote the following response:

Michael

We rejoice at your response. We believed this was the stand you took and now it is very clear.

We treasure the relationship we have with you and believe we are the better for it. We also have no problem with you being on our lectureship after receiving your answer. Fact is we look forward to seeing you and hearing what you will present.

Michael, if anyone questions us as to where you are on this matter do you object to us revealing your answers to the questions sent to you? Also do you object to us sending your response to those who have been corresponding with us mainly David Brown, Kent Bailey, Dub McClish and David Watson.

We love and appreciate you very much.

Elders

Ron Hall
Bobby Hall
Terry York

On 08/10/05 Michael Hatcher wrote the following:

Thank you for your response, but I know I am better for knowing you good brethren. I appreciate your confidence in me and will look forward to seeing you in September at the lectures.

If anyone questions you as to where I stand on this matter, please share with them my response to the questions or the whole email if you so desire. You can also let them see my editorial for the August issue of "Defender" (which is being printed today). If you wish to send the correspondence to those individuals, please feel free to do so. If there is anything else I can do, please let me know.

Michael Hatcher

On 08/11/05 Michael Hatcher issued the following Apology to the brotherhood:

Dub McClish, David Watson, and others:

I want to sincerely apologize to both Dub McClish and David Watson for the way things were handled and my part in all that took place regarding your no longer being with *The Gospel Journal*. My actions and votes at the time were out of the sincerity of my heart and what, at the time, I was lead to believe to be best for *The Gospel Journal* and its continued existence. I now realize that the information I received was wrong. I was being given the information that brother McClish's reputation had been ruined and that if he remained as editor the paper would die. Not having heard anything myself, I simply accepted what I was being told by my fellow board members (sadly, I did not realize that I could not accept what was being said and I apologize for that).

It now appears to me that there has been a concerted effort to destroy the reputation of a good man—Dub McClish. I apologize for my part in being used to further their cause. I am sorry for not doing some of the things that I should have done and not realizing what was taking place (especially behind the scenes) so I would not have had a part in it. Brother McClish had done nothing worthy of being forced to resign, but it appears to me that the board bowed to pressure to get rid of him, and I was made an unknowing accomplice in this. This pressure began with Frank Chesser's hate-filled response to brother McClish's summation of the Apologetics Press Scandal (which none of the board members thought there was any sin involved). But apparently to support Apologetics Press, brother McClish was sacrificed as was *The Gospel Journal* itself. I sincerely apologize to Dub McClish, David Watson, and the brotherhood for my part in this sad state of affairs.

Michael Hatcher

ITEM #8

During our conversation on September 6th with Barry Gilreath Jr. (after we rescinded his invitation) he stated that the Northside elders were being inconsistent regarding others who were scheduled to be on our lecturership. He said B.J. Clarke was scheduled to speak on an upcoming program with Dave Miller prior to our lecturership. While we knew about this situation and are concerned we don't believe there is any inconsistency as to our dealing with this concern.

The Northside elders gave B.J. the information regarding the Dave Miller controversy while he was at Northside in late May 2005 conducting our spring gospel meeting. On August 23rd B.J. voluntarily requested information from us about our withdrawal from the Calhoun Church of Christ. He said he was planning to meet with Miller about the controversy involving his meeting with the liberal Calhoun church and other issues surrounding him.

We have complete confidence in B.J. Clarke and have never questioned his work. We believe it would be in everyone's best interest, at this point, to allow him time to speak with Miller and see if he can help resolve the issue, one way or the other. Another thing we considered regarding B.J. is the fact he did not sign the AP/Miller endorsement and to our knowledge has not made any endorsements. We believe patience should be extended in this situation.

Charges of inconsistency were made about other brethren who are on this year's lecturership, but, those charges relate to other issues, which are not related to the AP/Miller controversy.

Because of the charges of inconsistency we are making the following correspondence between B.J. and Northside available.

On 8/23/05 B.J. Clarke Wrote:

Dear brethren:

Sorry about the delay in getting back to you. My wife's mother fell and broke her shoulder in early August. A staph infection set in, and then she got pneumonia for the third time since March. It was too much for her. She passed away on Friday. She was only 62.

We are here in Murray, KY for the funeral. I don't have my meeting schedule with me, so I'll have to get back with you when I return home.

Incidentally, could I get the documentation from you as to why you had to leave Calhoun? I am planning a meeting with Dave Miller to try and reason with him about some of the things he has done and said over the past few years. I want to be as prepared as possible when I talk with him. I already have the material you gave me after Dave Miller went to Calhoun. However, I want to be able to explain to him why his comments at Calhoun were so inconsistent with the things he has stood for in his writings (like Piloting the Strait).

Of course, there are other matters I wish to address with him, but I'm very concerned about the impression he left with the erring brethren at Calhoun. I am not so naive as to think that my talking with him will produce any magical results, but at least I will know that I tried.

You can either send me the material as an attachment in responding to this e-mail, or you can mail it to me at 681 Church Road E. Southaven, MS 38671.

Thanks so much. Looking forward to seeing you in September. I'll be in touch about the meeting dates.

Your servant and His,

B. J. Clarke

On 8/24/05 Ron Hall Wrote B.J. Clarke on behalf of the Northside elders the Following Message:

----- Original Message -----

From: [Ron Hall](#)

To: [BJ Clarke](#)

Cc: [Bobby E Hall](#) ; [Terry York](#) ; [David B Smith](#)

Sent: Wednesday, August 24, 2005 8:49 AM

Subject: Northside split from Calhoun documents you requested

Brother B. J.

Terry sent me your request for the information about the Northside split from the Calhoun Church of Christ in 1999. We appreciate your concern and desire to meet with brother Dave Miller regarding the part he played with our problems associated with the apostate Calhoun congregation. When we were in the heat of the battle at Calhoun back in 1998 and early 1999 I gave two of our three elders a copy of brother Miller's book *Piloting the Strait* in hopes it would help them address the liberal agenda that was in the Calhoun church at that time. Brother Miller's book so adequately laid out some of the issues we were facing then that I thought his book would help. Knowing also that Dave was scheduled for a meeting in October 1999 I thought they would pay more attention to what he had to say in his book.

But, after the split I heard that they resented me for giving them that book. Oh well, Dave's book certainly played a part in helping me to get out of that situation and I thank him for that.

Brother Miller received all the material relating to Jerry Dyer as well as other doctrinal error going on at Calhoun at that time well in advance of his coming to Calhoun. Jerry Dyer was the final straw for the faithful when the elders, preacher and all the liberals endorsed what he taught. Of course they loved what he said since he was singing their song. If you want an opinion from others who have heard the tapes (at one time I counted over 30 preachers and elders who had listened to the Dyer tapes) besides brother Garland Elkins and J.A. McNutt who wrote their review of his tapes in our open letter, you can check with David B Smith who made his on notes, Kent Bailey, Terry York and just recently brother Paul Vaughn who asked Terry York for a copy of Jerry's tapes while at the Bellview Lectures in June. Brother Vaughn reported back to us after listening to the tapes that Jerry Dyer was a not only a "false teacher" but a "lair" too. He requested that we send Rod Rutherford a copy because of some problem he had with Jerry while at ETSOP. If you would like to listen for yourself let me know and I will gladly send you a set.

B J there has only been two "sound" preachers who received Dyer's tapes, which I am aware of, that did not come away with the same conclusions as did brother Elkins and those good brethren mentioned above. One was brother Dave Miller (who apparently did not think it was important enough to listen to them) and one other who will have to remain confidential for now.

Miller's actions did more to give "God's speed" to the apostate Calhoun church than any single person who has preached there since we left. **Jerry Dyer** has returned at least five times or more, **Cecil May** twice, **Doran Flynn** twice, **Nathan Mellor**, **Ronnie Missildine**, **Mark McInteer**, **Avon Malone**, **Ray**

Hawkins (several times) who was from the North Atlanta church at that time and a host of local liberal preachers who have been marked by faithful brethren. Because of who Miller was (his book) his comments and endorsement closed more doors than any of those above. At the advice of brother Miller one brother repented to the Calhoun church for doubting the elders and about being discouraged and worried about the split. That one incident was what prompted two of our Northside members to call Miller and ask him why he would do this in light of all the evidence he had. How sad for all those souls which will probably be lost because of Dave Miller's careless actions.

Recently the Calhoun church announced a new outreach program that will allow them to reach out to the community and let them know they care. They are going to provide a "Christian" school and model it after the Greater Atlanta Christian School which is under the oversight of the Campus church in Norcross, GA. Campus is Georgia's version of Woodmont Hills in Nashville. Whatever the liberal trend, you name it, Campus does it. I believe Campus and North Atlanta compete to see who can be the most extreme. I wonder if brother Miller would return to Calhoun and endorse them again??? I know the man who wrote *Piloting the Strait* would not.

Of course I know you understand that there's more to Dave Miller's problems than his endorsement of Calhoun. The evidence about his teaching and practicing error on MDR and elder revaluation/reaffirmation is overwhelming. The packet of material that I gave you in May and the Brown Trail Truth Web-site is another. The August 2005 CFTF has some additional information that you need to read before your meeting with Miller. I will send you the August edition of CFTF under a separate email attachment. I will also send you our open letter and documents that I gave you in May by email attachment so you can have all that information on your hard drive.

We have heard that Miller has changed his mind about his position on MDR and R/R of elders. Miller has apparently told some who have met him about the MDR and R/R of elders that not one of those who have written him up had ever met with him personally to discuss the claims. Miller seems to have come up with an answer that appeases those who want to be appeased. Read the August 2005 CFTF carefully and you will see that Miller continually refuses to meet with his critics. He seems to have his select group to meet with. I believe those who meet with Dave Miller without being prepared with all the evidence will come away with a different view of what the actual evidence shows. Brother Miller is a smart man who knows how to communicate. I think he could be described as the man in Romans 16:17 "...which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned..." And Paul warns us to avoid them because in verse 18 "by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." I am afraid brethren who meet with Miller unprepared will be deceived and come away more confused than ever. I don't believe Miller will meet with those who he believes have all the evidence but I don't know either.

We understand that Miller was asked by some who recently met with him if he would make a public acknowledgement (since he said he has changed his mind about those errors he once taught) to the brotherhood. Miller supposedly said he was afraid the critics would still not leave him alone. Miller further said he was reluctant to do so for he was afraid his critics would misuse, alter or take out of context what he would write. What is Miller afraid of? B. J., this is the same answer we got from Jerry Dyer (in June 2000) when Northside wanted him to write a statement explaining why what he said and taught at Calhoun was misunderstood by us and not false teaching as he and the Calhoun elders claimed. Jerry absolutely refused to put anything in writing and has not written a response to this day.

Brother Miller has certainly been at the center of a great controversy and split in our brotherhood because of his error. He has caused much division. It would be a simple thing for him to clear up all this controversy if he will just make a genuine public repentance. If Miller is an honest man and has

repented of those errors that he once taught and practiced then he would issue a public acknowledgment so he could stop the division surrounding him and be received by the faithful brethren again.

Just as Miller endorsed the apostate Calhoun church, after having all the evidence which was clearly a violation of 2 John, Apologetics Press and Bert Thompson have done the same thing with Miller. With all the evidence at their disposal they embraced Miller anyway and are as much to blame for the current controversy and division as Miller himself. AP is and has been in violation of 2 John 9-11 and should not be fellowshiped until they correct their sin. If otherwise sound brethren had withdrawn fellowship two years ago when Miller was hired by AP as the Bible teaches we would not have the BIG problem we're having to face today. And the problem and division is getting bigger everyday. Why aren't some of our "faithful" brethren denouncing this violation of God's law on fellowship? I wonder what they are they afraid of too.

It seems to me that big brotherhood projects often create compromising relationships because of the great demands and needs they have for financial support. Too often that demand will affect their ability to see the truth on issues facing the church if it means losing support. In order to protect their big programs they will often create political alliances and then comes your "brotherhood politics". All those who create such alliances seem to, eventually, somewhere in their journey, start down the slippery slope of compromise and will often resort to deceit to cover up their compromise in order to protect and maintain their support. When their compromises are uncovered, more often than not, those brethren will do just about anything to destroy the faithful brethren who threaten their BIG work and refuses to compromise. Eventually the compromiser becomes the enemy of the faithful. How sad! B.J. I believe this scenario describes what has happen to our good brother Dub McClish and Dave Watson who refused to compromise on the AP endorsement. Both these men plan to attend our lectureship and of course Dave will be speaking with you on Thursday night.

The Northside elders are already having to deal with the AP controversy because of our upcoming lectureship that is dealing with all aspects of church discipline. As I mentioned earlier we believe AP is in violation of God's law on fellowship because of their association with Dave Miller over the last two years. Those brethren who signed the now "famous" AP endorsement with Miller's association with that organization, and we understand Miller is their new director, is causing us great distress. Our concern with those brethren relates to fellowship and whether or not they can make a distinction between "Dave Miller", as associate and director of AP, and the organization "AP". We don't believe you can endorse AP and not endorse Miller there is no middle ground or gray area as far as we are concerned.

Some have made the statement that since certain "sound" lectureships use Miller and "sound" brethren speak on those programs with him they are not necessarily giving an endorsement of Miller. Therefore, they reason, signing the AP endorsement does not and should be perceived as an endorsement of Miller and his false doctrines. They say they are endorsing AP because of the good it has rendered the brotherhood and hopefully will continue to do so. The elders at Northside believe the same thing about the good AP has rendered the brotherhood and we pray that it can continue, but, not if they continue to violate God's law on fellowship. But I wonder how they can so reason and still be faithful to what the Bible teaches regarding those who have been scripturally marked and withdrawn from for being false teachers. We believe Romans 16:17; Eph 5:11; 2 Thess 3:6; 2 John, etc., all teach us how to deal with a known false teacher. Now if Dave Miller is not a false teacher, but, "sound" as some now claim, why not encourage Miller to repent publicly of the charges against him and stop all the division he and this controversy is causing. B. J. I hope you can have some influence in this regard. It sure would make our work at Northside easier if this controversy were resolved.

The reason the Northside eldership wrote the “To Whom It May Concern” letter about Dave Miller was to warn good brethren who were coming to Northside about his error. We knew that there may be those who didn’t know about Miller and needed to be warned. The Northside elders have made a decision not to invite anyone back who continues to fellowship Miller after we have shared the information package with them. We are charged to protect the flock at Northside and we must be consistent with what the Bible and we teach concerning fellowship. With that said, we look forward to hearing the results of your meeting with brother Miller. If he repents, we are ready to forgive him and get back to the great work God has entrusted to all the faithful. It would be a great day in the Kingdom to have Dave back by our side fighting the spiritual battles together.

We are looking forward to your lesson “The Role Of Preaching In Church Discipline” on Thursday night of our lectureship. We are sure you will do your usual great job of proclaiming what the Bible says on the subject. The gospel meeting you conducted here in May was one of the best I’ve heard so far. Very good material and we appreciate all your hard work and time.

B. J. the elders and all the members here at Northside have the utmost respect for you and your stand for the truth. We appreciate the sacrifices you make for us and the brotherhood with your efforts to preach and uphold the gospel. We also appreciate the sacrifices your family makes by allowing you to be away so much. If you need any additional information please let us know and we will be more than happy to help.

Your Friend and Brother in Christ,

Ron Hall

On 09/02/05 B.J. Clarke wrote:

Ron:

Sorry for the delay in acknowledging receipt of your e-mails. Tish's mother died, and then I got home and left for Chicago, IL. Just got back.

Got all of the info. Thanks for sending it. It will be helpful to me. Sorry, I don't have time to write more, but we are inundated right now with helping out with displaced hurricane victims.

Looking forward to seeing you at Northside in a couple of weeks....

With brotherly love,

BJ

On 09/02/05 Ron Hall wrote the following response:

B.J.

I'm sorry to hear about the passing of Tish's mother. My mother is still living at age 81. I lost my dad several years ago and I know the emptiness it leaves inside you. Please convey my sympathy to Tish. We will pray for her and you during this time.

The "Open Letter" concerning Dave Miller’s meeting at the liberal Calhoun Church of Christ has been updated a bit since I sent you the copy you have now. We put a paragraph explaining who Jerry Dyer is since most people have never heard of him. Please use/read the copy I have attached below (see item #4with your material. If you have any questions please let me or the Northside elders know. We only

want to be helpful in resolving this great controversy while staying truth to God's word on fellowship. For your information I wrote Wesley Simons and sent him the same documents you requested. He is going to call and talk with Dave Miller about the controversy and division he is causing also.

The Dave Miller and AP issue is affecting us deeply with our upcoming lectureship, particularly with the AP endorsement, TGJ issue and the Dave Miller fellowship issue. All these issues continue to be a problem for us. We hope you good brethren can get somewhere with this problem. Please let us know about the outcome.

Yes, I have my camera ready! I have been thinking about posting a before and after??? If you are able to be here on Friday morning we plan to have all the preachers and their wives at Shirley Brown's for her now "famous" breakfast. We really hope you can stay for this. Shirley asked about you if you would be able to be there. We will need to take your after picture before Shirley's breakfast!

B.J. we appreciate you and look forward to seeing you again at our lectureship.

Ron

Item #9

The following correspondence took place between the Northside elders and the Highland elders regarding “Giving and Receiving” as it pertains to Biblical fellowship:

On 01/03/02 the following article was written and published in the Northside Bulletin “The Transformer” Calhoun, GA.

"A Forgotten Form of Fellowship"

David B. Smith

No faithful saint would deny that fellowship is a treasured aspect of Christianity. The joy of the common salvation, the like precious faith, as saints agree upon the Truth, exists far more beautiful than human words can describe. Indeed, approved fellowship is a refreshing drink of cool water to the soul; for, there is something uniquely special about the cooperation of God's children upon the foundation of the Truth and for the cause of the Truth. Faithful saints need other faithful saints in their daily task of living right and pressing toward the attainment of the crown of righteousness. And, so, within the framework of fellowship exists the ability to bid one God speed, to endorse his righteous activity, to participate in acts of holiness together, et cetera; truth, of course, is the standard for fellowship (II John 9-11). Fellowship, then, is not an issue to be taken lightly. There are conditions that require constant attention, which, if violated, promote the devil's agenda and breach the beautiful relationship that once existed between God and the violators of His doctrine. A full knowledge of fellowship, its implications and its limitations, is therefore required of every child of the Almighty.

Standard definitions of fellowship, in the practical sense, have likely fallen on two extremes. Some understand the nature of fellowship, but refuse a practice consistent with the definitions, while others engage in activities without an understanding that such activities constitute an extension of fellowship. Most, however, understand that fellowship involves a joint participation, cooperation, the ability to endorse, and such like. For a large number, then, it is easy to understand that participating in some spiritual service, such as a lectureship, or endorsing the spiritual status of another, such as advertising and/or promoting some activity of an individual or congregation, equates to a reciprocal extension of fellowship on the part of every person involved. Yet, there seems to exist a general deficiency of knowledge with regard to what has become a forgotten form of fellowship — giving and receiving. Perhaps some are ignorant willfully of this particular form of fellowship, knowing the admission of such would require the refusal or cessation of certain moneys either outgoing or incoming, respectively. Regardless of what claims may be made to the contrary, though, giving and receiving is indeed an extension of spiritual fellowship. This is ably affirmed by Paul of the Philippians, when of them he states that "no church communicated ["had fellowship," ASV] with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only" (Philippians 4:15).

The term "communicated" (KJV), or "had fellowship" (ASV), is a translation of the verb *koinoneo*. This verb is from the root *koinonos*, which simply inheres "fellowship." Kittel concludes, "the word is especially adapted to express inner relationship."¹ Relationships or activities described by these words are more than mere, casual acquaintances; they express activities or relationships in which both parties are joined in the closest possible sense and agree mutually which the spiritual state of the other. This is well established from the negative uses of the verb, such as in I Timothy 5:22 and II John 11. In both instances, one who endorses or engages with someone in sin is as guilty in the sin as any other party

involved. Thus, the Greeks would employ the verb *koinoneo* with *phonon tini* to indicate that one was an accomplice in the murder of someone. Hence, the verb inheres a sharing, a partnership, an agreement, a taking part with another or a communion with another party. And, as pertaining to the area of giving and receiving, Greek lexicographers Moulton and Milligan rightly confirm that "*koinoneo* is always used of active participation, when the result depends on the cooperation of the receiver as well as on the action of the giver."² Hence, in the spiritual "giving and receiving," the accomplishment of the spiritual task depends upon both actions — making the givers and the receivers equal parties together in the spiritual task. Giving and receiving is fellowship.

Application is the hardest part for some, since the truth of the matter will perhaps require a revision of certain actions (whether of giving or receiving). But, truth is the issue here; purity is at stake in this crucial matter. No person or congregation may either give to or receive from another individual or congregation who resides in error on some point. To do so would make the pure impure, as he or they would now be party to the error. For instance, congregation (A) starts a work that requires more monetary assistance than can be covered by congregation (A) alone. Request for financial assistance is noised abroad, and soon the number of congregations who wish to help grows. Of the congregations who wish to help, congregation (B) is known to teach the error of "unity in diversity;" congregation (C) tolerates immoral activity; and congregation (D) holds error with regard to divorce and remarriage. All of the other congregations are doctrinally sound. Needing financial assistance to get the program "off the ground," congregation (A) accepts the financial support of every congregation who offered, including B,C and D. But, in receiving support from other congregations, congregation (A) has endorsed every congregation in the endeavor. Now congregation (A) is party to false doctrine and immorality, by consent. The same is true of giving. Suppose that congregation (A) is searching for a work to support, rather than receiving. Congregation (B), who holds the error of "unity in diversity," is offering a program that seems to have the potential of great appeal in the community. A decision is made by congregation (A) to give congregation (B) support in their endeavor. Once again, congregation (A) is party to error, by the process Paul called "giving and receiving." This principle is applicable to every spiritual labor, be it a lectureship, a benevolent work, a school of preaching, a missionary or missionary trip, a television program, a radio program, or such like. "Giving and receiving" in faithful works, among the faithful, is truly a rewarding experience, but the giving and receiving between any party of unfaithfulness is spiritual injurious to all involved.

Ultimately, there will be those who rebel against the very principle of "giving and receiving." The plea is often heard that "the ends justifies the means," that "the devil's had the money long enough." But, who could believe that such an attitude is becoming of Christians, who are to be transformed daily into the image of the Christ? Regardless of what "defense" may be offered to the contrary, the Sacred text will still affirm that "giving and receiving" is fellowship (Phil. 4:15). And this is perhaps where a word of wisdom can be offered: no congregation or individual should endeavor to start a work that cannot be begun and sustained by the assistance of faithful brethren, and faithful brethren only. This is merely the principle of "counting the cost," in the most practical form. Too often, brethren start what would otherwise be a great work, but find themselves desperately short of the basic needs after starting. In turn, this usually leads to a compromise in receiving support from those with whom the Lord has no fellowship. This should signal a clear warning to all that prevention is the key. Questionnaires and the information passed along by reliable brethren is necessary, not wrong. The goal is to do all things by the authority of the Christ (Col. 3:17), and this requires the acknowledgment of and respect for the sometimes forgotten form of fellowship — giving and receiving.

References:

1. Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1965, vol. 3, p. 797.

2. J.H. Moulton and G. Milligan, Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson), 1930, p. 351.

On 04/26/04 the Northside elders sent their first letter to the Highland elders regarding “Giving and Receiving” as it pertains to fellowship:

April 26, 2004

Elders
Highland church of Christ
901 Chester Street
Dalton, GA. 30721

Dear Brethren,

The current eldership at Northside, which is composed of Bobby Hall, Ron Hall and Terry York, felt we should share with you our concerns with regards to a particular question that came up during our appointment phase to the eldership last fall. Until now our concerns with this issue have not been made public in the sense it has not been presented to you, the Highland eldership, in a formal way. We have not discussed this concern publicly out of respect for you and your oversight of the work under consideration. We hope that after reading our response to the question at hand that no one will make this a divisive issue between Northside and Highland. This is an issue, however, that should be studied and taken very seriously. We send you brethren this letter in brotherly love and we hope you will receive it this way. We hope and pray that now, and in the future, we can discuss issues facing the church in an objective manner without any personal conflict or injury. Our concerns will involve doctrinal matters, as it pertains to the authority of the scriptures, and not matters of opinion or expediency involved in carrying out our authorized work.

Below is the question posed to us during our appointment phase that concerns you and one of the works which you have the oversight. We want to share with you our response to this question and the issue we have raised in this matter so you can have an opportunity to study these concerns as to their scriptural validity.

Question:

Please provide your thoughts (positive or negative, or both) on the “Preaching the Gospel” television program?

Answer:

We believe “Preaching The Gospel” television program is a good and sound work within itself. James Watkins is a faithful and proven Gospel preacher who needs to be heard. We believe the elders of the Highland church of Christ, who oversee this work, are good men who love the church and desire to do the will of God in all things.

With that said, we do have some scriptural concerns that need to be addressed. We would not consider our concerns “negative” at this time. Concerns are not always “negative” nor are they always “problems”. Concerns about issues should be properly addressed and given time to be worked out. We have given much study and prayer to this particular situation. For some time we have had concerns regarding some of the financial supporters of this program because of God’s law on fellowship.

We have no personal motives in what we have to say. We are always concerned about programs that Northside supports as to their being scriptural. We will give an account for everything we do as individuals, and as a congregation, when it comes to the church and her work. We will also give an account for what we “don’t do” in regards to the commandments of God. The only authority we have in matters of religion is the Bible. It is our only guide to Heaven. We must obey all the commandments given in the holy Bible in order to please God and be saved. This principle applies to the concerns we have with God’s law on fellowship in “giving and receiving” of funds in order to support what is otherwise a sound work. We must let the Bible determine what is right in this matter and all matters regarding the work of the church and not rely on our feelings or the opinion of men.

When you, the Highland eldership, publicly withdrew from the Central Church of Christ in Dalton, Georgia in July 2002 you were obeying God’s law of fellowship in refusing the “giving and receiving” of funds from an apostate church. This was the scriptural thing to do based on years of apostasy by this congregation. When you refused to be in fellowship with Central and sent their support checks back to their elders, you were practicing the Biblical teaching on fellowship, (Rom 16:17; Eph 5:11; 2 Cor 6:14; Phil 1:5-7; Phil 4:15-17; 2 John 10-11). You showed us, by example, how to handle the fellowship issue regarding “giving and receiving” and we commend you for doing that. We are commanded therefore to support your decision, based on the evidence you provided, and uphold your actions and have no fellowship with the Central church of Christ until they repent. We do not bring up the above situation with any pleasure, because souls are lost when they refuse to obey God. However, we are happy that the Highland eldership chose to obey God in this matter. (1John 1:6-7).

We shouldn’t think that Central is the only apostate congregation which supports such a large program as “Preaching The Gospel”. There is evidence of other congregations who support this work who are more blatant in their apostasy than Central. When a faithful congregation is involved in this program with Highland and you (the overseeing eldership) receive an apostate congregations support, we all become joint participants, not only with Highland, but with the apostate congregations as well. When the TV program advertises the names of those apostate congregation at the end of each program as “one of the churches of Christ in your community who makes this program possible” we are then endorsing them and therefore are bidding them “God’s speed”, (2John 10-11). This causes the Northside eldership great concern for the spiritual welfare of Northside, Highland and all other faithful congregations involved in this work.

Would the Highland congregation and her eldership participate in any of the following activities or fellowship those who do? “Children Church”, “Winterfest”, “Impact at Lipscomb”, “Uplift at Harding”, “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief, Inc.”, “Herald of Truth”, “Lads To Leaders/Leaderettes, Inc.”, “Support Any Para-church organizations whether Medical, Benevolent or Evangelist”, “Church Ball Leagues”, “Car Wash or Garage Sale to Raise Funds For Mission Trip”, “Church Gymnasiums”, “Puppet or Drama Shows”, “Singing groups such as ‘Acappella’ or ‘Corner Stone’, etc.”, “Small Group Meetings replacing Sunday evening services”, “Celebrate Christmas or Easter”, “Praise Teams”, “Female Ministry Leaders”, “We Care Campaign”, etc...

Would you fellowship those who engage in the following sins? “Adulterous Marriage”, “Social Drinking”, “Those who attend the Dance, Prom, etc.”, “Those that hold and teach error on the ‘WORK’ of the Holy Spirit today”, etc...

Would you fellowship or allow the following men to speak in your pulpit? “Larry West”, “Randy Becton”, “Steve Flatt”, “Walt Leavers”, “Joe Beam”, “David Newberry”, “F. Lagard Smith”, “Charles Hodge”, “Patrick Mead”, “Harold Hazelip”, “Keith Parker”, “Jerrie Barber”, “Jack Evans”, etc...

Would you encourage your congregation to attend a denomination for a “Love Won Out Conference” sponsored by “Focus On The Family”? We don’t believe that you would allow such activities, sins, speakers or joint denominational participation. But, some of the current supporters of “Preaching The Gospel” are engaged in one or more of the above digressions.

The following list represents just a few of the congregations who practice at least one or more of the digressions listed above and are participating in “Preaching The Gospel” TV program. “East Brainerd, Chattanooga, TN”; “Hendersonville, Hendersonville, TN”; “Hillsboro, Hillsboro, TN”; “Mountain Creek, Chattanooga, TN”; “West End, Knoxville, TN”; “Woodstock, Woodstock, GA”. There are others but this list is sufficient to make our point.

Can we continue to ignore the plain Bible teaching on fellowship in light of what we know about these apostate congregations and the overall state of our brotherhood? No longer can we trust someone who says, “I’m a member of the church of Christ” and just assume they are faithful and in fellowship with God. We need to be vigilant and walk circumspectly, (1 Tim 3:2; Eph 5:15-17). We are formally presenting this concern to the Highland elders. We believe this issue must be addressed if you are not already doing so. We firmly believe you will address this concern according to the scriptures. Again, we hope this will not be made into an issue between Northside and Highland.

Many times when an issue like this is raised you will hear the “what if questions” come up in defense of “this or that” practice. We believe you can “what if” the fellowship issue, and every-other issue that faces the church today, to the point we will do nothing about the issues we face and will surely face in the future. Doing nothing will not take care of the problems we’re facing in the Lord’s church but will only cause them to be compounded. Will we continue to ignore God’s law on fellowship? God has commanded us not to have any fellowship with error and certainly not to give them any endorsement, (Rom 16:17; Eph 5:11; 2 John 10-11). Non-Christians who hear these good sermons by brother Watkins do not know the “spiritual” danger that they will encounter when they attend one of these advertised apostate congregations. (Rom 16:18). We need to respect God’s word. We need to love the souls of all men (non-Christians and apostate Christians) and do what God’s word says on this matter. We believe a lot of souls are at stake here including our own, if, we continue to do nothing.

We believe you (the Highland eldership) should be consistent when it comes to fellowship in this regard and handle all apostate congregations supporting this program as you did the “Central Church of Christ Dalton, GA”. If “Preaching The Gospel” program is too big to monitor all those who participate, then we believe this program is too big! The end does not justify the means; we must obey God’s law on fellowship. The Highland elders, as the overseeing eldership of “Preaching The Gospel TV program”, have the responsibility to make sure fellowship is not being violated in the “receiving” of these funds. It is our responsibility to the Highland eldership to address any issue we believe violate scripture. We are accountable to God for our involvement in this program and all programs and activities that we as a congregation choose to participate.

We would like to suggest, and this is just a suggestion, (Northside has no Bible authority to make decisions for Highland and we don’t intend to), that some sort of screening process be initiated such as a questionnaire, since you have so many supporters and cannot know all of them personally, in order to know where those congregations who support this program stand on doctrinal matters. The way this issue is handled will be left to the sole discretion of the Highland eldership. We acknowledge the need to be patient here and not make this an issue for Northside or Highland until there is ample time to study and address this problem properly. If we are wrong regarding our concerns in this matter, and you point that out by the scriptures, we will repent of our error.

We look forward to hearing from you after you have had time to discuss our concern. We have attached several articles that further address the fellowship issue under consideration. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further please let us know.

In His Service,

Elders

Northside church of Christ, Calhoun, GA.

Bobby Hall

Ron Hall

Terry York

On 09/15/04 this (revised) letter along with 35 page attached documents (Not printed here) was given to Barry Gilreath, Jr. (Highland elder when he spoke at our 2004 lectureship) because of Dave Miller's proposed involvement with GBN.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Brother Dave Miller has been marked as teaching error on MDR and revaluation and reaffirmation of elders. His false teaching on these issues have been fully exposed in several publications including *The Gospel Journal*, *CFTF*, *The Defender* and a website called *Brown Trail Truth* at <http://www.brown-trail-truth.com/>. The evidence of his errors and participation in them is overwhelming. Since brother Miller has been marked as a false teacher he should repent before faithful brethren use him in their meetings and lectureships or appear with him on such programs. The Bible clearly teaches us how to deal with a false teacher (Romans 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11; 2 John 9-11). After reading the evidence provided by the brotherhood papers noted above and the website, one should be able to draw his own conclusions as to the error he holds.

Northside's concern with Dave Miller involves his violation of God's law on fellowship. Our dealings with brother Miller began in October 1999 when he conducted a meeting at the Calhoun Church of Christ in Calhoun, GA. The faithful had departed this congregation six months earlier (April 1999) because of doctrinal error, which was documented in our "Open Letter" and "Reasons Why We Left" journal.

Prior to brother Miller's coming to Calhoun, some of our Northside members who had left the Calhoun congregation contacted brother Miller and provided him with a copy of our "Open Letter" which we had sent to the Calhoun elders on April 18, 1999. In this "Open Letter" we documented the doctrinal reasons why we left. We also sent brother Miller a copy of the audio tapes Jerry Dyer (a marked false teacher) had presented at the Calhoun Church of Christ in February 1999, in which he taught at least seven doctrinal errors that are documented in our "Open Letter". When the Calhoun eldership were asked if they agreed with what Jerry Dyer taught, they all stated before thirty men in a meeting on March 22, 1999, that they believed and supported what Jerry Dyer taught. We knew then it was time to withdraw ourselves from that apostate eldership.

Who is Jerry C. Dyer? Jerry Dyer came to Calhoun as a "Specialist" in "Conflict Resolution". He had earned his M.D.R. in "Alternate Dispute Resolution" from Pepperdine University School of Law in Malibu, California. In January 1999 he was appointed director of "Clayton Pepper Center for Church Growth Studies" at Ohio Valley College (University). Jerry Dyer's first of many visits to the Calhoun church was February 5-7, 1999, shortly after taking his new position at Ohio Valley College. Jerry is a modern day "change agent" who teaches and promotes "unity in diversity".

The Northside brethren had been gone six months when brother Miller came as scheduled to the Calhoun Church of Christ and conducted a Friday-Sunday night meeting. On the last night he praised the Calhoun elders for their soundness and good leadership. He also praised the Calhoun preacher as a good man and encouraged the congregation to “hang in there” with these good men. He went on to say that he knew they had just been through a tough time, but in time things would get better. The sad part to all brother Miller’s praises and endorsements of these brethren was the fact that he had all of the evidence that this was a marked apostate church for some five months before coming to Calhoun and he bid them God’s speed anyway.

As a result of brother Miller’s comments two of the Northside members called Dave Miller and asked him why he endorsed this apostate congregation in light of the documents he had been provided showing their doctrinal errors. His response was, “I don’t have time to read or listen to all the stuff I receive”. His attitude toward them was short and as if he didn’t care about our concerns. Needless to say, he closed the minds of the Calhoun members that had been concerned about the soundness of the Calhoun Church of Christ. After that night, all doors that had remained open to teach and explain the doctrinal errors that existed in this apostate congregation were closed.

Three weeks after Dave Miller left Calhoun, the apostate church paid the expenses to move Avon Malone to Brown Trail School of Preaching from Oklahoma Christian University. It would appear that money was part of the motive for Miller’s holding this liberal apostate leadership up in high esteem.

Dave Miller was reminded of the Calhoun problem again in 2003. David B. Smith, minister of the Northside church of Christ, along with other preachers, refused to speak on a lectureship with brother Miller because of the controversy surrounding him. Brother Smith wrote brother Oscar Craft, director of the Palmetto Bible Lectureship, Greer S.C., which was scheduled for October 12-16, 2003, and told him about the situation here in Calhoun and provided him with information about brother Miller’s false teaching. Upon receiving this information, brother Craft wrote a letter of cancellation to brother Miller and asked him to repent of his error and correct the situation he had created in Calhoun. As of August 30, 2005 we have not heard from brother Miller concerning this situation.

The participation with and endorsement of a known apostate church by brother Dave Miller is a violation of God’s law on fellowship (2 John 9-11). This is yet another error brother Miller needs to repent of before he can be received by the faithful.

Our prayer is that brother Miller will repent of all the error he has taught and of his participation with a known liberal congregation. We pray that he will repent and stop the division he is causing in the Lord’s church. We hope he will live up to the man he presented himself to be in his book, *Piloting the Strait*. We pray that faithful brethren everywhere will uphold the marking that faithful brethren have placed on brother Dave Miller until he makes a public acknowledgment of repentance.

Elders, Northside church of Christ
Calhoun, Georgia

Bobby Hall
Ron Hall
Terry York

On 10/20/04 the Highland elders sent their first response to the Northside elders regarding “Giving and Receiving” as it pertains to fellowship:

October 20, 2004

Dear brethren,

We are writing in response to your letter you sent to us some time ago. We apologize for the delay in our response. We have had a change in leadership since the time of receiving your letter and we are now beginning to catch up on some of our written correspondences.

First, let us express our appreciation for the good relationship that Highland and Northside have enjoyed since the Northside congregation was established several years ago. You have been an encouragement to us and we hope that we have been the same to you. We have appreciated your stand for the truth and your love for us.

Now concerning the matters you wrote to us about, we have discussed at length on several occasions the letter you have written to us. Brother Barry has also reviewed with us the meeting you asked to have with him following his lecture on Wednesday evening during your lectureship.

Though we are appreciative for the sincere interest that you have demonstrated in the work we oversee, and are sensitive to the opinions you hold as dear brethren in Christ, we would respectfully disagree with any suggestion that we are in violation of scriptural teaching regarding Preaching the Gospel Television Program. We find no *scriptural* reasons to verify the implication that the Highland congregation is in *any* violation of God's word in receiving funds for this or any other work we are involved with.

First, we are not aware of any supporting congregations that have been publicly withdrawn from by the faithful brethren in their area. Perhaps this is why not a single eldership, outside of our dear brethren at Northside, has *ever* questioned contributors of Preaching the Gospel. If a congregation has not been publicly marked and withdrawn from by the *faithful* brethren in their *own* area, it would seem odd to say the least to ask a congregation such as Highland to not receive funds from a church that area brethren may perhaps consider to be weak in the faith, but not completely apostate.

However, even if a congregation were to be withdrawn from (and again, we are not aware of such among our contributors), certainly you would agree with us that Highland would still retain the right as an autonomous congregation to weigh the evidence and make a determination based upon the facts available for ourselves. It would be dangerous indeed, if brethren were expected to *always* follow foot and step with the decisions of a given eldership that proclaims another eldership or congregation to be unfaithful. Such would create a hierarchy that is totally unfounded and not supported by the teaching of the Bible.

Please consider the following. If congregation "A" withdraws from congregation "B", hopefully congregation "C" would be persuaded by the same facts that such a withdrawal should be reciprocated. Nevertheless, congregation "C", as an autonomous congregation, does not get its marching orders from any congregation, but the Lord. And to protect the integrity of the process and the purity of the church, congregation "C" must have adequate opportunity to evaluate and make such a decision for themselves as to how they believe such should be handled. For it is certainly possible that congregation "A", though proceeding with good intentions, may have inadvertently made an issue out of a non-issue (this certainly happens from time to time, even among good brethren), or perhaps congregation "A" may not have used patience and/or distinguished between a weak congregation that still has signs of spiritual life and an apostate congregation from which the Lord has removed His candlestick (Rev. 2:5). Congregation "A" must determine what they will do using the scriptures, good judgment and the facts at hand, and congregations "C", "D", "E", and "F" must do the same thing. In proceeding as such it is certainly possible that sometimes congregation "A" may reach a different conclusion than congregation "C". They

may be totally in agreement regarding the teachings of scripture but disagree on the application of such to a given situation. They may disagree whether signs of spiritual life still exists in a congregation or whether enough patience and encouragement has been provided, or whether such is just a weak congregation, or an apostate church. Since both are autonomous congregations, and both love the Lord and the souls of those in congregation "B", such should not become an issue for contention between congregations "A" and "C". Such agreement therefore protects the integrity of the process, the teaching of church autonomy, and preserves the unity of peace between congregations "A" and "C".

Though we certainly recognize that there may be some weak congregations that contribute to Preaching the Gospel from time to time, we respectfully disagree that such congregations have been proven to be apostate, and no longer recognized by the Lord as a church. Certainly we are not sympathetic or in agreement with the organization of Lads to Leaders, churches building gymnasiums, the promotion of ball teams, etc. (as noted in your letter as being present in a few congregations that support Preaching the Gospel), though we do not share the same opinion suggested by the good elders at Northside that such activities are proof that a congregation is apostate.

Secondly, though we certainly don't solicit the support of unfaithful brethren, even if a congregation or individual were proven to be unfaithful and apostate, we disagree with the premise that when one receives funds from such a source, such an act *always* (every time) constitutes an act of fellowship. There is more to fellowship than simply receiving funds. If such were true, then *any time* an unfaithful member of the church or a non-Christian of their own decision chooses to give during the collection of the saints, and that monetary gift is received (deposited) by the local church, sin is *always* committed (every time) on the part of the congregation who deposits the unsolicited monetary gift. We have a hard time seeing the logic that would suggest that if an unfaithful brother contributed on the Lord's Day at Northside such would not be an act of fellowship, but if an unfaithful brother contributed to Preaching the Gospel through the Highland church such is an act of fellowship. Again, neither Northside or Highland would solicit such funds, but does simply receiving such funds constitute an act fellowship? We do not believe such to be the case. Consider another example. If fellowship *always* (every time) occurs when money is received by the church for some work the church is involved in, then when an unfaithful member or even a non-Christian gives a monetary gift to be used as a memorial for the purchase of teaching material (books) in the church library, fellowship is extended to the non-Christian or unfaithful member of the church by the local congregation through their reception of those funds.

We do not know of a single congregation at home or abroad that scrutinizes contributions or memorial gifts to such a degree to insure that such funds are *only* given from faithful members. In fact, often brethren *do know* the source of the contribution (as in the example of a memorial), and do not see a conflict of faith or a compromise of truth in simply receiving that contribution for some sound work of the local church. Brethren are rightly able to make a distinction between simply receiving funds (which already belong to the Lord anyway), and engaging in some form of ungodly fellowship. The same is true of our work with Preaching the Gospel. We do not solicit funds from the unfaithful or the non-Christian no more than Northside does in their local work. The process we use to receive funds is no different than what occurs with the Northside brethren on any given Lord's Day, or through the reception of special memorial gifts for the church library that you receive from time to time. When a congregation receives a memorial gift or a general gift during the collection on the First Day of the week, this is not *necessarily* an act of fellowship. If a brother were to die and a non-member who is a relative of the deceased were to give funds to purchase a book of your choosing for the church library, would you see the reception of that gift as a compromise of faith and an act of fellowship with a non-member. You are not endorsing the non-Christian simply by receiving the funds. You do not support his false views, and you did not solicit his funds. Yet out of courtesy and respect the gift would be received and used for the *proclamation of truth*, which hopefully could convert the non-Christian, and anyone else outside of Christ. Likewise, if Highland were to receive such funds from an apostate congregation (a group of

unfaithful Christians), though it would probably be a rare exception for an unfaithful church to contribute to contribute to a faithful work that combats error, simply depositing those funds does not constitute an act of fellowship.

We certainly do not endorse any aspect of liberalism or a departure from the truth that any individual or element within a local church may promote. We write against those elements of change. We preach against them and emphasize the dangers of such, both on the local level and through our works that we oversee, including Preaching the Gospel. We believe that Highland has been a beacon of light for truth and distinctive teaching and preaching in this area and throughout the entire brotherhood for many years. Certainly we desire to be respectful of your views, but ask that you consider that we can only assume that such conclusions are not the general consensus of faithful brethren in the church, since this is the first time we can remember such being brought for our attention in the years that this work has been active. Again, we believe that such is the case because brethren rightfully make a distinction between simply receiving funds, and in engaging in an act of ungodly fellowship, and because brethren who might hold views common to the elders at Northside certainly would not expect Highland to refuse funds from congregations in which the sound brethren in their own area have not determined that such course of withdrawal was yet justified.

Again, let us express our appreciation for the wonderful relationship that our two congregations have shared in the past. We support the good church at Northside and will continue to do such. We value your fellowship and friendship, and hope that we can do great things for the cause of Christ together in future efforts. We certainly hope that this matter does not hurt that relationship in any way. We believe that such matter is like unto that of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 16:36ff.) who had some strong opinions on an important matter, but did not allow such to become an issue of support for one another. We would certainly love to have your encouragement and financial support for Preaching the Gospel and the new Gospel Broadcasting Network. However, if providing such support would prompt you to go against your own conscience, we certainly understand, though we hope that such is not the case.

May the Lord bless you and keep you as we prepare to enter the New Year.

The elders of the Highland church of Christ.

Barry Gilreath, Sr.
Barry Gilreath, Jr.
Skip McNutt
Bob Moreau
Jimmy Wood

On 11/15/04 the Northside elders sent their second response to the Highland elders regarding “Giving and Receiving” as it pertains to fellowship:

November 15, 2004

Elders
Highland church of Christ
901 Chester Street
Dalton, GA. 30721

Dear Brethren,

We appreciate the courteous consideration shown by the elders of the Highland church of Christ in responding to our concerns regarding Preaching the Gospel. As you expressed in your letter, we too have enjoyed the relationship existing between Northside and Highland. Hopefully the lines of communication will always be open between us.

If it was assumed that we do not respect the autonomy of the Highland church of Christ, we apologize for leaving that impression. It is not our intention to interfere with any of the decisions the Highland elders would make in relation to matters of expediency, judgment, or “opinions,” as you suggested. Even though the church at Northside supported Preaching the Gospel, we never tried to influence the decisions made as to how the program would be conducted. We trusted the ability of Barry Gilreath, Sr. to be able to effectively carry out the task as he worked under (and eventually as one of) the Highland elders. Therefore, realizing the autonomous nature of the church and the objective nature of truth, we acted independently without any consideration of what others may believe about the issue before us. We did not seek to see, nor “assume” whether our concerns were or were not the conclusions of a “general consensus of faithful brethren in the church.” The reason we requested to discuss the program with the Highland elders was simply because of our joint participation with you in this evangelistic effort. Any questions or issues raised by us were the result of what the Bible has to say rather than what the majority of brethren may think (Col. 3:17).

We are encouraged by your “unwillingness to always follow foot and step with the decisions of a given eldership that proclaims another eldership or congregation to be unfaithful,” especially in view of the lack of Bible knowledge and spiritual immaturity of so many elderships throughout the brotherhood. Anytime a congregation such as Northside or Highland would look to a particular eldership, congregation, or general consensus within the brotherhood for our authority in any decision, it would be guilty of creating a hierarchical arrangement. Certainly we agree that Highland not only retains the right but also has the responsibility to weigh the evidence and make choices based on the facts in any decision you face.

The elders at Northside believe we are united with the Highland elders upon the principles discussed up to this point. The difference between us is whether or not receiving funds from a particular congregation would be a violation of God’s word on fellowship. It is not whether a congregation, such as Highland, can receive funds from a congregation that area brethren may perhaps consider to be weak in the faith. The issue before us is whether or not a faithful congregation of the Lord’s church can be engaged in a joint work with a “known apostate congregation” (whether they have been marked and withdrawn from or not) and not be in violation of scripture on fellowship.

After Barry Gilreath, Sr. and Terry York talked about this problem several months ago, Barry Sr. acknowledged this was a difficult situation because area congregations had failed to identify and expose such congregations that obviously had departed from the truth. Barry Sr. said if they had knowledge of congregations being identified and marked as erring or apostate, the elders would investigate, and if warranted, discontinue receiving their support for Preaching the Gospel. In this regard, we fully appreciate and unreservedly support the decision of the Highland elders when you refused to accept support from the Central church of Christ in Dalton, and returned their funds. When Barry Gilreath, Jr. met with us during our lectureship in September he informed us that the Highland elders would continue to refuse funds from the Calhoun and Central churches of Christ. We are confident that this decision was not founded merely upon expediency, brotherhood consensus, or opinion, et al., but rather upon a realization that a continuation in this joint evangelistic outreach would be a violation of God’s word on fellowship.

With that being said, may we ask a few questions for consideration? Why is it acceptable to receive funds from a congregation who has digressed to the same degree or even to a greater level than the

Calhoun and Central congregations? It seems odd, to say the least, that just because a congregation has not been, “publicly marked and withdraw from by the faithful brethren in their area”, they are considered to be somehow less unfaithful.

Another question is, how can a faithful congregation participate in a joint work with an apostate congregation as long as the faithful congregation doesn't solicit the money? Is there something involved in non-solicitation that would change an apostate congregation into a faithful congregation? Or would not soliciting resources transform a fellowship issue into a non-fellowship issue? Does the fellowship issue between righteousness and unrighteousness exist only when solicited (2 Cor. 6:14). Please consider the following analogy. Is prostitution wrong only when the customer (faithful congregation) solicits the prostitute (apostate congregation)? This may sound facetious, but we more than welcome your help in our understanding this concern. We are trying to be as consistent as possible.

The next question we would ask is, do you think it is consistent to receive funds from a congregation where you could not recommend one of the listeners or viewers of Preaching the Gospel to attend? For example, Barry Gilreath, Sr. acknowledged to Terry York that he was aware of the digression existing within the East Brainerd church of Christ in Chattanooga. Shortly after Barry Sr. and Terry talked about this situation, Preaching the Gospel discontinued displaying the supporters which included the East Brainerd church of Christ. For whatever reason this was done we are greatly encouraged by the decision. But suppose one of the viewers of Preaching the Gospel asked you about East Brainerd, could you recommend that congregation to someone?

Brethren, the most important, pressing question is whether or not receiving funds from an unfaithful congregation is a violation of scripture in regard to fellowship. We do not know what the majority of the brotherhood thinks about it. We cannot tell you whether or not any other congregation or eldership has ever scrutinized contributors who help them financially in their work or to what degree. Is the issue of fellowship in “giving and receiving” only a matter of judgment - a view of one person, congregation or eldership disagreeing with the view of another, or is it a question the Bible answers regardless of whether all are in agreement upon the subject or not? What does the Bible say about this particular subject?

Regardless of which Greek lexicon/dictionary one chooses, the word “fellowship” whether in the noun (koinonia, metoche, koinonos) or verb (koinoneo, sunkoinoneo) forms, carries the same basic meaning. For example; Strong defines fellowship as: “Partnership, that is, (literally) participation, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction: - (to) communicate (-ation), communion, (contribution), distribution, fellowship.” Thayer defines fellowship as:

“Fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse 1a) the share which one has in anything, participation 1b) intercourse, fellowship, intimacy 1b1) the right hand as a sign and pledge of fellowship (in fulfilling the apostolic office) 1c) a gift jointly contributed, a collection, a contribution, as exhibiting an embodiment and proof of fellowship.”

From just a surface reading of these definitions one can see the possibility of receiving contributions from liberal, apostate, unfaithful or however one chooses to describe such congregations, as being a matter of fellowship or endorsement. If this is the case are there different levels of fellowship such as “Big F and little f,” or may one have godly fellowship with apostate congregations but at a certain point it becomes “ungodly fellowship”? When Paul wrote to the church at Philippi he referred to their participating in the spread of the gospel with him as fellowship (Phi. 1:5; 4:15). When he alluded to the collection for the needy saints at Jerusalem he described it as fellowship (2 Cor. 8:1-4). But never does he suggest a partial or different level of fellowship. If the spreading of the gospel is not to be done exclusively by the faithful saints then why is it wrong to have car washes, bake sales, etc.?

Is there a difference between accepting contributions for a specific church work and accepting a check in the contribution? Our response would be “yes”. Worship is something God accepts on an individual basis. God holds each individual accountable for his/her worship. When the whole church comes together to worship there are unfaithful members present who engage in the five avenues of worship. There are non-Christians who also participate. Each individual is only accountable for himself/herself. The acceptance of all five acts of worship are accepted or rejected by God as they are being executed. Worship “in giving” is accepted or rejected when it is given, not when it is deposited in the bank. If our acceptance of worship is dependent on everyone in the assembly being a faithful Christian then heavens doors are bared. So the analogy given is invalid.

What about memorial gifts? Again we ask a question, what joint work is a congregation participating in when one donates a book to the church library. Any individual who donates a book or money to purchase books in memory of a friend or loved one does not constitute a joint participation with any authorized work of the church. This is neither inconsistent nor in violation with any scripture in regard to scriptural fellowship.

Brethren we acknowledge the firm stand the Highland church of Christ has taken for the truth over the years, both in preaching and writing. The Northside congregation has placed many excellent articles by Barry Gilreath, Jr. before the congregation and encouraged our members to read them. We also believe Preaching the Gospel sends a distinct sound for truth across the country. All we ask in relation to Preaching the Gospel, and now in addition G.B.N., is to consider the consistency in preaching against liberalism, digression and apostasy, while at the same time joining hands with them in both Preaching the Gospel and G.B.N. We realize the struggle in congregations and in our own individual lives in being consistent; but we hope neither of us will ever willingly be inconsistent nor violate God’s law on any matter simply because of the difficulty involved (Acts 14:22). We trust that neither Highland nor Northside will ever make judgments based solely upon brotherhood consensus.

We treasure the relationship we have had with Highland over the years. We do not intend to hurt that relationship in any way. Hopefully the conclusions we reach and the decision we make regarding the supporting of Preaching the Gospel and G.B.N. will not allow our friendship to be jeopardized. We are confident that this issue is not a parallel in any way as it was with Paul and Barnabas, (Acts 15:36ff). We do believe it to be more closely a parallel with the issue of those men who came down from Judea (Act 15:1-29). If there is one area we will express our opinion, it is, that these works (Preaching the Gospel and G.B.N.), have the potential to draw good sound brethren into fellowship with liberal apostate brethren. And, we fear that liberals will one day control these programs if they get their foot in the door.

As to whether we decide to continue our support, that will be based upon (1) the outcome of our discussion, (2) our concern with the change of the director of Preaching the Gospel, and (3) upon the scriptural nature of the fellowship issue, not strictly upon the violation of our conscience. The violation of conscience alone is too subjective for us at this time.

We are willing to look objectively at any evidence or insight the Highland elders may present on this teaching whether it is through written correspondence or discussion in a set meeting with you. Our line of communication is always open to our dear brethren at Highland.

Elders

Bobby Hall
Ron Hall
Terry York

On 02/22/05 the Highland elders sent their second response to the Northside elders regarding "Giving and Receiving" as it pertains to fellowship:

February 22, 2005

Dear brethren,

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the restoration of a sister in Christ. We also thank you for your support of our Winter Lectures in January.

Concerning your letter regarding the funds we receive for Preaching the Gospel, again, we want to emphasize that *we do not solicit funds* from those we believe to be unfaithful. In the past we have even refused funds from unfaithful brethren when the elders believed that such was not in the best interest of truth.

Nevertheless, the issue at hand seems to be whether receiving funds from an unfaithful congregation or individual *always* creates fellowship between the two parties. Certainly we would affirm that it is possible for *any activity* to result in fellowship, but simply because two parties participate in any activity, doesn't mean fellowship is always the result. For example, a church would welcome visitors from the community to attend their worship services, but the congregation's invitation coupled with the visitor(s) attendance and participation during the worship service would not mean the church was engaging in fellowship with the visitors. A Christian might have a religious discussion with a non-member over lunch, but such participation and social discourse doesn't necessarily result in fellowship. An unfaithful member may choose to participate in giving during the collection along side of faithful members, but such does not necessarily result fellowship with the congregation. A non-member may choose of their own accord to send a financial gift in honor or memory of someone towards the purchase of books for the church library, but such doesn't necessarily result in fellowship with the congregation. If one were to apply the same stringent criteria to these examples that are being used to judge Preaching the Gospel, any of these activities could be argued as creating fellowship. For they all involve "participation, social intercourse, or communication, or a gift jointly contributed." Yet, we are confident that you too would acknowledge that such would be a misuse of the term. Certainly one's intent would have to be given consideration. Even Thayer noted, it is "the right hand as a sign and pledge of fellowship." It seems clear to us that one's objective in any activity is a factor in determining fellowship, as would be demonstrated in providing the "right hand of fellowship". Christians communicate or have social discourse with unbelievers everyday, but such isn't necessarily fellowship. Jesus himself had social discourse with unfaithful children of God, received gifts from them, and even dined with Judas the betrayer, yet we would not accuse him of extending fellowship to the unfaithful. Fellowship involves far more than the faithful and unfaithful simply participating in a common activity.

We attempted in our first letter to illustrate such by offering a couple of common examples. One example we used was in receiving a contribution during the assembly. When an unfaithful brother gives during the collection, is fellowship with the church the result? Certainly not. The gift of the unfaithful was neither solicited, nor affirmed by the receiving congregation. There was no right hand of fellowship extended as a sign of such fellowship. There was an attempt in your letter to make a distinction between receiving funds in the assembly and receiving funds via the mail for Preaching the Gospel, but truly there is no difference. For at issue is not the worship being received or not received by the Lord, *but the funds being received and used by the church*. Will Northside receive and use funds given by unfaithful members during the collection of the saints? The answer is most certainly "yes", as would be the answer of perhaps every congregation. Receiving unsolicited funds from the unfaithful during the collection of the faithful and using such is not a violation of fellowship. We also would affirm that receiving unsolicited funds from the unfaithful while collecting from the faithful for Preaching the Gospel is also not a violation of fellowship.

Also, we asked you to consider the giving of funds by an unfaithful member towards the purchase of books for the library. We were surprised by your response, "What work of the church is a church library"? Brethren, it is the same work of the church as a radio or television program. It is the same work as a tract ministry or Bible School program. It is the preaching and teaching of the word of God. Whether through words spoken or written, the work of the church is being carried out through these venues. We would recommend the fine article by your faithful evangelist David Smith, as speared in the Calhoun Time on December 8, 2004.

It is the work of the church to plant the seed of New Testament Christianity (Luke 8:4-15; I Cor. 3:6); and the first-century Christians did just that, "therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Now to accomplish this task there were two aids: edification and benevolence. Edification is the act of promoting spiritual growth among the saints of God and providing the necessary encouragement and cooperation to accomplish the work of the church (Ephesians 4:16; Jude 20).

A library certainly meets the criteria set forth by brother Smith. Furthermore, if a library is not a part of the work of the church, by what authority can the church use the treasury to purchase books and support such? Most assuredly, *a library is a part of the work of the church*, or it has no authority to exist and be funded by the church.

With this in mind, please help us to understand why the Northside elders would affirm that a unfaithful brother can give \$100 in the contribution at Northside on Sunday and it is alright for the church to receive it and use it, send \$100 towards the purchase of books for the Northside library in memory of someone on Tuesday and it is alright for the church to receive it and use it, but then that same person sends that some amount to Highland for our television program on Wednesday, and such funds can not be received lest Highland violate God's law for fellowship? Perhaps you can see why we do not understand your contention. We believe that if Northside is to take the position that no funds *should ever* be received by the church from *any one* under any circumstances, except by faithful members, consistency should be pursued in the assembly and through special gifts given such as memorials. If Northside did such, though we would disagree with your conclusions, we would at least believe you were consistently following that which you are encouraging us to do.

There were several questions you asked in your letter. We will briefly address them.

Q - Why is it acceptable to receive funds from a congregation who has digressed to the same degree or even greater level than the Calhoun and Central congregations?

A - First, you are assuming that such degree of digression is the case, but for arguments sake we will address your question. As we have already affirmed, we do not knowingly solicit funds from apostate congregations, and in the example of Central, the eldership at that time were under the impression that Preaching the Gospel was being used as a smokescreen to persuade/deceive some at Central that they were supportive of truth. The eldership did not want to receive funds from a congregation who would use this work for such divisive purposes.

Q - Do you think it is consistent to receive funds from a congregation that you would not recommend one of the listeners or viewers to attend?

A - Yes, we do believe that it is consistent. Simply receiving funds in and of itself has nothing to do with an endorsement of the giver. If a member of the Calhoun congregation were to come into your assembly and give during the assembly, would you feel compelled to return their funds? If so, why would you not do the same with any gift given by any unfaithful member or unbeliever? Perhaps you would not feel compelled to return it because you recognize that such is not an endorsement of the giving party. That is our position.

Furthermore, when making a recommendation, surely you would agree that some choices are better than others. In other words, even among faithful congregations within the same area, there are some congregations that would obviously be a better choice. Perhaps factors might include the strength of an eldership, preacher, Bible school program, or the evangelistic outreach of the group. Just because we would not want to recommend a particular church does not necessarily even mean that the church is apostate. It might simply be a weak congregation, and that there are other better choices in the

same area. If you were living in New Testament times, and there was a faithful congregation within walking distance of Corinth, would you recommend someone to the Corinth church or the other faithful congregation? Corinth had its problems. Corinth would not be at the top of our list for recommendation. However, it was still a congregation of the Lord's people. It was a very weak church, yet it still was a church with a candlestick. Paul affirmed that he had a right to take funds from this obviously weak church (I Cor. 9:1-14). Consider also a more modern application. Would Northside recommend the Adairsville congregation? We understand that you are still in fellowship with them, but that you have come concerns, and perhaps would not recommend them? Obviously there are some congregations that are stronger and more faithful than others. This is one of the reason we no longer list churches at the end of the program. We do not want to unknowingly direct a spiritually weak person to a spiritually weak congregation. Our purpose is not to advertise congregations, but to promote the truth of the Gospel. When recommendations are requested, we will try to recommend the best choice.

Q - How can a faithful congregation participate in a joint work with an apostate congregation as long as the faithful congregation doesn't solicit the money.

A - If by "participate" you mean fellowship, then they cannot. A faithful congregation cannot scripturally fellowship an apostate congregation. We both agree on that point. The area of difference is that you believe that if an unfaithful congregation or individual were to send unsolicited money to Preaching the Gospel, and such money was not returned, then such always becomes an act of fellowship. We would not agree with such a conclusion, nor do we believe Northside can be consistent and hold that position, as we have noted. Fellowship is more than simply receiving unsolicited funds. There are many variables involved in fellowship, of which participation is one. It is a part, but not the whole of what constitutes Christian fellowship. In other words, all fellowship involves participation, but not all participation results in fellowship.

Brethren, we are supportive of the good Northside church and hope to continue to be, however, we want you to be straightforward with us. If this is a matter of fellowship between Northside and Highland, then we would like for you to clearly state such so that there will be no misunderstanding regarding your support of Highland or lack of it. We commend your zeal for the truth, however, we believe you need to rethink the position that you have advocated in light of the truth and for the sake of consistency. As we stated in our earlier letter, we believe that this is a matter of opinion. It is like unto that of the eating of meats. If you believe that by giving to these great works, you would sin, because there may or may not be unfaithful brethren who from time to time give unsolicited gifts, then by no means would we want you to violate your conscience. But again, we would remind you that Northside is the only congregation who has ever raised such concern. We believe that it is due to the fact that most brethren would not see such as a violation of fellowship in light of how they themselves, including Northside, handle financial gifts within their local body.

Now as far as Brother Dedmon working with Preaching the Gospel, we do not understand why you have expressed concerns over this matter. Are there facts you are privy to that would justify such doubt of faithfulness? We will not say anything more regarding this issue at this time, and will wait till we have received facts from you that prompted such doubt to be raised.

We appreciate and share your desire that liberalism never get a foothold on these programs, but we would hope that such fears of what could happen would not prevent good brethren from supporting good works such as Preaching the Gospel or GBN.

Elders

Barry Gilreath, Sr.
Jimmy Woods
Barry Gilreath, Jr.
Skip McNutt
Bob Moreau

On 04/18/05 the Northside elders wrote their third and final response to the Highland elders regarding "Giving and Receiving" as it pertains to fellowship:

April 18, 2005

The Elders
Highland church of Christ
901 Chester Street
Dalton, GA. 30721

Dear Brethren,

We apologize for the delay in responding to your last letter to us (February 22, 2004), however, we assure you that much time has been spent in careful consideration of your rejoinder. Not only has there been a considerable amount of time reading and meditating upon your response, but also in reading the past communication between us. In addition, since you made a reference to the situation with the Central church of Christ in Dalton, we have reread your letter to them (and the additional material you sent with the letter dated July 7, 2002) to make sure there had not been a misunderstanding on our part as to what took place during that occasion. This being said, please allow us to reply to your last letter in the order it was written.

One: Concerning Marline Greeson we hope all continues to go well with her. As you now know, after observing her attending with her son, she has a very difficult situation. We will continue to encourage her. Please be patient with sister Greeson as she strives to be faithful. We also appreciate your expression of thanks for our attendance at your Winter Lectures.

Two: As to our discussion regarding the receiving of funds for Preaching the Gospel and now in addition G.B.N., we acknowledge your statement, "we want to emphasize that we do not solicit funds from those we believe to be unfaithful." Since that statement was made we have been informed that that affirmation is no longer accurate. This is not an assumption on our part; neither did the information come to us second hand. This eldership has met with two brethren who preach for the apostate Calhoun church, whom the Highland elders have accepted documentation as to their apostasy, who were solicited at the Freed Hardeman Lectures. Shall we assume that these were the only apostates in attendance from whom funds were solicited? As to whether this would constitute fellowship, the preachers (who brought G.B.N. up in our meeting) expressed the possibility of their participating in the G.B.N. program. They also recognized (by their own statements) our duplicity for not extending fellowship to them in certain areas, but participating with them should we join with them in supporting G.B.N. Mack Lyon also affirms that participating in "In Search of the Lord's Way" program is fellowship as stated in the September 2004 "Search Light". Brother Lyon's states: "...join hands with us NOW. WE NEED YOUR HELP! AND WE'D LOVE TO HAVE YOUR FELLOWSHIP" p.2. With this being said we must also conclude (lest we make an unwarranted assumption), that the DVD's promoting the program, are mailed to faithful congregations only.

Three: As to the issue of fellowship regarding a church library, you suggested, "funds by an unfaithful member towards the purchase of books for the library did not transgress God's law on fellowship". Our concerns with this issue that you raised did not involve whether or not one could accept a memorial gift donated to a library or cash or check placed in the collection plate. You stated in both of your responses that there is no transgression of God's law on fellowship in either instance, to this we agree. To accept a book for a library would be no different than accepting a month's free utilities from N.G.E.M.C. What joint work would a congregation be participating in to do so? This would be no more an act of fellowship than giving a check to keep receiving electrical services. But we continue to ("attempt" to) make a distinction between a worship service and a joint evangelistic effort. Christians are not engaging in fellowship with the apostate or sinner who drops a dollar or thousand dollars into the collection any more than Christians would be in fellowship with the same apostate or sinner who would choose to sing, pray, listen to the preaching or partake of the Lord's Super. And if the said donation should be deposited, who would have sinned, the one

who made the deposit, the elders or every Christian present for worship. Since the scenarios presented in your letter to us were basically the same as in your first response in relation to this, we believe they were answered sufficiently in our last correspondence to you.

Four: As to eating and having conversation with those in the world and how this involves scriptural fellowship we do not see a need to respond other than to say there is a vast difference in these activities (1 Cor 5:10) and jointly participating in an evangelistic effort (2 John 9-11).

Five: Your use of Galatians 5:9 to negate the fact that "joint participation" in spreading the gospel is not fellowship is a misuse of this passage. Thayer's statement regarding "the right hand of fellowship" appears only one time (Gal. 2:9). Here the fellowship in the gospel existed before the event (right hand of fellowship) occurred. This indicates that the fellowship was not dependant upon the announcement or act. The context clearly bears out the fact that the phrase is figurative showing that Paul was accepted/acknowledged by James, Peter and John as receiving the grace of apostleship to the Gentiles.

Six: It is not denied in our letter to you that a library is a work of the church. Your quotation marks indicate a direct (word for word) citation. Please check your reference from which you quoted. Our statement reflects joint participation, not whether a library can be used as edification (we understand this to be the suggestion seeing the excerpt from the December 8, 2004 article from which you cited).

Seven: Regarding your response to our question "Why is it acceptable to receive funds from a congregation who has digressed to the same degree or even to a greater level than the Calhoun and Central congregations?" we did not assume the digression of a congregation(s) to be of a greater degree than the Calhoun or Central congregations. Facts of their digression are available and even advertised. We would not have made such a statement upon an assumption. Neither were we considering a "weak congregation."

Eight: We could not help but notice that nothing was written in your last response (February 22, 2005) regarding what the scriptures teach on fellowship as taught in Philippians 1:5; 4:15 and 2 Corinthians 8:1-4. However, we believe it is properly applied in the following discussion.

The reason given in your last response for no longer accepting support from the Central Church of Christ does not reflect the reasons given in the July 7, 2002 letter you sent to them and circulated to other faithful brethren. Your letter to them was clear and decisive when you wrote:

"Again and again, the facts prove that the Central congregation no longer stands for the saving truth that unites us to one another and the Lord (1 John 1:6-7).

Liberalism is tearing asunder the body of Christ. **We can no longer in good conscience continue to fellowship in the Gospel a congregation who continues to pursue a destructive course of compromise with the truth** (emphasis ours). We are heartbroken that we have been forced to make such a decision, but in light of the facts and the biblical teaching regarding Christians' obligation to such, we have no alternative (Rom. 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11). **We will be true to the Lord and His teaching** (emphasis ours). Congregational autonomy is not a license to trample under foot the Lord's precious church."

An eldership would be hard pressed to construct a more firm, yet touching letter than the one written by the Highland elders to the Central congregation on July 7, 2002. This letter is an obvious, direct contrast to the defense being made now for accepting funds indiscriminately (or in your words to us, without "scrutinizing") for Preaching the Gospel and G.B.N. We believe the Highland elders who penned the July, 2002 letter to Central answer adequately the defense against the position presented by the Highland elders in your February 22, 2004 letter. We will simply let the July 7, 2002 letter serve in response to the rest of the matter concerning "giving and receiving" in spreading the Gospel as being fellowship.

Nine: As to the suggestion, "that Northside is the only congregation who has ever raised such concerns" we

do not let that determine the decisions we make. But Northside is far from being alone in their concerns. As the standards for participation is being lowered, many eyebrows are beginning to be raised.

Ten: We appreciate your support of the Northside church. We also intend to be straightforward. If we were ambiguous in expressing our concerns we apologize. If you are asking if we have withdrawn fellowship from Highland the answer is no. We do believe the Bible is clear in its instruction in relation to fellowship. The doctrine of fellowship is a matter of faith not opinion. God's law on fellowship is a matter of salvation as you pointed out in your letter to Central, whereas eating of meats is not.

As to our participation in G.B.N., we refuse to join hands in a cooperative work with those who are tearing the church apart. That would be the height of duplicity, but most of all a total disregard for the scriptures (Rom. 16:16-18; Eph. 5:11). Our same concerns apply to Preaching the Gospel. Neither do we choose to participate in a work directed by Leroy Dedmon due to our lack of confidence in him to oppose liberalism. The facts you requested are available through his tract record. The information is available for you should you think it necessary to pursue such.

We are enclosing an audiocassette of James Rogers' lesson delivered at The 2005 Florida School of Preaching lectures. We hope the Highland elders will take the time to listen and consider the things spoken. We also ask that you read the material enclosed written by Roger Campbell dealing with fellowship.

We love the Highland congregation and personally know many of her good members. It is with fond memories that we recall six years ago when the Highland congregation and your elders, Bob Moreau and Jimmy Woods, were a big encouragement to Northside during our departure from the apostate church in Calhoun. Hearing Barry Gilreath, Jr. preach was like a breath of fresh air compared to the "stagnate" liberal preaching we had heard for years at Calhoun. We appreciate the kindness and support you rendered to us during that difficult time. It was because of our love for you brethren and for Truth that we brought our concern with the fellowship issue of "giving & receiving" to your attention. We believe we have adequately provided you with enough evidence from the Bible as it pertains to "giving & receiving" constituting "fellowship". Therefore receiving funds from sister congregations to support an evangelistic work must comply with God's law on fellowship. It is not our intention to continue with these discussions from this point. However, we are still open for objective discussion if you choose to do so. We pray the good association we've enjoyed in the past will continue.

Your Friend In Christ,

The elders

Bobby Hall

Ron Hall

Terry York

Please Note: The Highland elders informed us on October 4, 2005 that we failed to include a third letter (dated 04/28/05) as their final response in this exchange. The Highland elders made a big issue out of this letter because we did not include it in our packet of material dealing with our first letter exchange on "Giving & Receiving" as it relates to fellowship. The reason we did not include it was because we never received this letter. Although we requested a copy on October 4, 2005 (when the Highland elders brought this to our attention) we did not receive it until November 19, 2005.

The Northside elders are very troubled by this letter for the following reasons.

- 1. The highland elders were adamant about this letter being written on April 28. Please note the following quote taken from their October 4, 2005 statement:** “Needless to say, we were amazed to learn that the Northside elders reproduced all private written discussions, with the obvious exception of a letter we wrote to you dated April 28th, 2005. For some reason, this letter was not included in your packet to your members. Our letter to you was dated ten days following your.” **The letter we finally received was a computer printout dated April 29, 2005.**
- 2. The content of their letter has statements made of events that were not known as of the date of their letter. Please note a quote from this letter:** “In the May 18th, 2005 bulletin of the Bremen church of Christ, he is advertised as holding a gospel meeting at Vila Rica.” **There is a Bremen bulletin dated May 18, 2005 which was published three weeks after their April 29, 2005 letter. Another quote from same letter:** “May we remind you that brother B.J. Clarke spoke in your meeting and he along with the Southaven church are involved in GBN.” **This meeting referred to was conducted on May 22-26, 2005 which means this would have been over four weeks after their April 29, 2005 letter was written.**
- 3. In our judgment the over all content of this letter does not fit the discussions going on in our first letter exchange dealing with “Giving & Receiving”. The content is more in line with the dialogue which occurred during the AP/Miller exchange which took place in August and September 2005.**

Before we published this letter we wanted to verify with the Highland elders if they indeed wrote this letter on April 29, 2005. We asked one of our elders (Terry York) to call Barry Gilreath, Jr. on November 28th to confirm if April 29th was the actual date the missing letter was written and he said YES. We asked brother Gilreath, Jr. why they did not send us a copy of the original and he said they did not keep a copy. Again, Terry asked if they had changed/alterd the letter in any way since the original date and brother Gilreath, Jr. said absolutely not. He said the only thing different from the original letter (which we never received) and the one we received on November 19th, 2005 was the signatures of the Highland elders were missing because they did not keep a copy of the original.

Brother Gilreath, Jr. then e-mailed Terry York, after their phone conversation, and made the following reference to the missing letter: *"As far as the April letter you inquired about, I do not understand what you are trying to prove or insinuate by your questions. We provided you with the draft we had saved on our computer. You brethren are the only ones who would have the original hard copy, and for that matter the only copy, since we have not sent that particular letter to anyone other than to yourselves."*

Please read the following “missing letter” and make your own judgment as to when this letter was written.

On 04/29/05 the Highland elders wrote their third and final response to the Northside elders regarding “Giving and Receiving” as it pertains to fellowship: This is the “missing letter” referred to above:

April 29, 2005

Dear brethren in Christ,

We have received and reviewed your most recent letter. We are in agreement with you in that we also have no interest in continuing to pursue this matter. It appears to us that there are firm positions held on both sides, and we do not know what good can come from continuing such discussions. We regret that such correspondence has hindered the good relationship we have enjoyed with Northside in the past. This will be our last response regarding this matter, unless it is deemed necessary to continue such at a later time. We would ask that you consider several matters we shall make note of in this letter. If you choose to answer this letter, we would ask that you address eight specific questions we will pose.

We believe that Highland has enjoyed a special relationship with the Northside congregation ever since the congregation was established a few years ago. To our knowledge we have supported every effort you have implemented prior to these discussions beginning, both in attendance and in advertising. We have even dedicated large portions of our bulletin at times to promote your good works, more so than *any* other congregation. We have promoted the Northside congregation *consistently* from the pulpit and have used the evangelists at Northside for various functions on numerous occasions. As an eldership, we have never said one disparaging word to our members regarding this or any other matter. We desire for that relationship to continue, yet the persistent inferences of unfaithfulness directed toward us regarding this matter of judgment, and the visible lack of support that you have determined not to provide to these great works are certainly counterproductive in such. Certainly your members will inquire, if they have not already done so, as to why you will no longer support Preaching the Gospel and perhaps why Northside will not support GBN that is overwhelmingly being supported by faithful brethren. Such discussion can't help but to have an effect upon the relationship of our congregations. We are saddened by your decision to allow a judgment matter to be a test of faithfulness. No, we do not believe that fellowship is a matter of judgment, but we do believe that you have made an issue a matter of fellowship incorrectly.

Good brethren have always had differences of opinion regarding some matters, and yet they have resisted the urge to divide over such things that are hypothetical or perhaps even rare at best. For example, can a Christian go to war? We certainly have our own views regarding this matter, but we hardly see that this should become an issue that should divide faithful congregations. We believe you would agree. And what of the issue that was discussed at White Oak several months ago. Should such a rare or even hypothetical issue be the source for division among area congregations?

We see no difference in the issue at hand than in the one discussed at White Oak or the question of the Christian and war. It is a hypothetical issue at best, since there are *no supporting congregations* to our knowledge that have been withdrawn from, and if an unfaithful brother or brethren were to send support, it would probably be a rare instance, since the very purpose of GBN is to provide "sound preaching and teaching 24 hours a day, and seven days a week." Such a contribution would be self-defeating, since the speakers for GBN and the programming will provide a *constant* supply of the *truth and only the truth*.

There also seems to be persistent doubt regarding another matter of our discussion. We will affirm once again that it is not our desire to knowingly solicit the liberal element of the church. There have been several instances that have come up in recent times where we have taken

steps to insure such. For example, many months ago, the Christian Chronicle wrote us and asked us to provide information so that they could do a large write up on our effort. Certainly this would have provided a lot of exposure for this work. We discussed the matter and determined that we would not provide the information since many who read and support their publication are of the liberal persuasion, and that is not the element within the church we were trying to appeal to. Any information they have received, published, or will publish is completely independent of the Highland eldership. Also, when we mailed our DVD out, we tried to eliminate congregations that we knew to be apostate. These are only two examples of many in which the Highland elders have sought to have the highest standards in our efforts. Your allegation that the Calhoun congregation has been solicited has no substance whatsoever to any fair-minded person. (1) Do you mean to suggest that just because an unfaithful member of the church happened to be seated during a general assembly at the Freed-Hardeman Lectures, unbeknown to us, that an invitation to fellowship was extended to the unfaithful? Surely you would not apply that same reasoning to your own assembly. This has been part of the problem as we see it. There have been two standards used in these discussions - one for Northside and one for Highland. (2) If Northside has no control over who happens to be in your own assembly of 100+ when financial matters or mission works are discussed in announcements, sermons, or when a visiting missionary addresses the assembly, why would you expect Highland to have such control over who happens to be in an assembly of 1000+ at the Freed-Hardeman Lectures when the DVD is played? The standard you are judging us by is not fair, nor do we believe that you would consistently apply such reasoning to your own assembly. If you have taken time to review the DVD, you will surely note that soundness and distinctiveness is emphasized from beginning to end. We would wonder why any unfaithful congregation would even want to be supportive of a work that will include faithful brethren such as Winfred Claiborne, B.J. Clarke, James Watkins, Tom Holland, Gary McDade, John Shannon and others of their caliber. Nevertheless, if an unfaithful brother happens to be in an assembly of the faithful, and he makes the *assumption* that he is sound, that is not our fault, no more than it would be your fault, if such occurred at Northside on any given week. Despite your claim in your previous letter, we continue to affirm in the strongest way that *we do not solicit the support of liberal brethren*. We don't know how much plainer we can make this. Either you believe our affirmation or you do not. If you do not accept our statement, then this is another matter altogether, and that deals with our integrity.

Another area of concern we would like for you to address is in regard to brother Dedmond. We also take this charge very serious. We had hoped that you would have substantiated such serious charges with facts. You did not. This is the second letter in which no specifics have been provided that would prove the allegation you have made of his unfaithfulness to the truth, and if such information is so readily available to prove the allegations, why do other congregations you consider to be faithful use and promote him. Last summer he was invited to participate on the summer series at White Oak. In the May 18th, 2005 bulletin of the Bremen church of Christ, he is advertised as holding a gospel meeting at Vila Rica. Surely you do not think that brother Rogers or the good brethren at White Oak would use or promote a man that is unfaithful to the truth. We have asked what evidence you have to prove the serious allegations. You simply state that the information is available if we cared to investigate. (3) Do you believe that it is fair to accuse brother Dedmond or any other person of unfaithfulness, but to provide no facts when asked for by the overseeing eldership? We would hope that if such allegations are made again, that specific facts are documented to prove such claims. And in all due respect, we would have hoped that because of the good relationship we have had with you over the past few years, that you would have had confidence in *us as the elders* who oversee the work, not so much in brother Dedmond who works *under* our oversight. However, we have met with brother Dedmond, prior to him assuming his role. We have had discussions

with him regarding doctrinal matters, just as we would with *any* man who serves under our oversight. We were satisfied with *all* of his answers, and thus far no facts have been presented that prove otherwise. What more can we say? If you have facts, please provide them. Otherwise, please do not defame one of our evangelists who work under our oversight.

Another area of concern in your last letter dealt with the claim that other sound brethren were raising their "eyebrows" regarding this work. We certainly expected great scrutiny, especially from liberal brethren. We are attempting to bring about what is in our judgment the greatest effort of evangelism in modern times. Yet you make the assertion of eyebrows being raised. We would like to know the specific facts of this assertion. (4) Who are the "many eyebrows"? We would like to contact these "eyebrows" and address any concerns they have.

Another area is in regard to memorial gifts. In regard to your letter dated November 15th, you stated,

What about memorial gifts? Again, we ask a question, ***what joint work is a congregation participating in when one donates a book to the library*** (emphasis ours)? Any individual who donates a book or money to purchase books in memory of a friend or loved one does not constitute a ***join [sic] participation with any authorized work of the church*** (emphasis ours).....”

We assumed from this statement on November 15th. that you did not believe that a church library is an authorized work of the church, and that you therefore believed that laws of fellowship would not apply. Yet, in your letter on April 18th, you state, ***It is not denied*** (emphasis ours) in our letter to you that a library is a work of the church.....Our statement reflects joint participation, not whether a library can be used for edification”.

From this clarification we now understand you to affirm that the library is a work of the church, but that no fellowship is being extended to the unfaithful when they choose of their own accord to contribute to this specific work of the church, even though faithful members also choose to contribute to this work. Certainly we would agree with this conclusion. We do not believe that such a contribution from an unfaithful member means that laws of fellowship are being violated by the faithful. Yet the position you have taken regarding GBN is highly inconsistent with your position regarding the work of edification through a library . Your position as we understand it is that if Highland were to receive unsolicited funds from an unfaithful brother or congregation for GBN, that Highland would be fellowshipping the unfaithful simply in receiving such funds, and that the faithful who also contribute to this work would also be fellowshipping the unfaithful simply by their own contribution to GBN. As you noted, “...we refuse to join hands in a cooperative work with those who are tearing the church apart.” Our question is this, (5) If a church library is a work of the church to provide edification, why doesn't Northside violate laws of fellowship when unfaithful members or even non-members choose to give toward this specific work (edification) of the church? And if there is no violation of fellowship in the example of a library, why do you continue to insist that such is the case in the specific work of a television program, which also provides edification.

Brethren, we believe that a church library is a work of the church. That is why we can support it financially. It provides both edification, and can even promote evangelism in some situations. No doubt this is why the Northside elders and the Highland elders would want to scrutinize materials that are placed in the library. If we were not dealing with matters regarding the truth of the Gospel, this would be unnecessary. Yet it is highly inconsistent for the Northside elders to affirm that Northside can receive non-solicited funds from unfaithful members or non-

members for this work of the church, and then for the Northside elders to affirm that if such unsolicited funds were to be sent to our works of Preaching the Gospel of GBN, that such is a compromise of fellowship.

Another area we would like further clarification regarding is our fellowship with one another. You state,

"If you are asking if we have withdrawn fellowship from Highland the answer is no. We do believe the Bible is clear in its instruction in relation to fellowship. The doctrine of fellowship is a matter of faith not opinion...."

Yet in the next paragraph you state,

"As to our participation in G.B.N., we refuse to join hands in a cooperative work with those who are tearing the church apart."

Fellowship is a matter of faith. We agree. Yet this is not what is at issue. What is at issue is whether receiving *unsolicited funds* from the unfaithful to support the work of the church through the general collection, or through specific works such as a library or even a television program, always and every time constitutes fellowship. We affirm that such is not always the case. You have affirmed such as well by saying no violation occurs when one contributes to a library, which exist for the edification of the church and evangelism in some instances. Certainly anything can become an act of fellowship, but it doesn't necessarily follow that such *always* becomes fellowship. You have agreed with us that such does not necessarily always constitute fellowship in the area of the general collection, and in the area of a specific work such as a library. Yet we are sure that you would agree that even within the general collection, fellowship would be violated if an appeal to the unfaithful or non-Christian were made to "join with us". What someone does of their own accord has no bearing upon the work of the faithful. You recognize this in the example of a library and the general collection. However, for some reason, you do not want to consistently apply such reasoning to the specific works of GBN or Preaching the Gospel.

(6) Now in conclusion, if we are in violation of a matter of faith, as you certainly imply, and if we are unknowingly fellowshiping the group that is "tearing the church apart", through our works of Preaching the Gospel and GBN, how can Northside scripturally fellowship Highland? Again, we see an inconsistency in your application of the teaching regarding this matter as well. If your charges are valid and we are not dealing with a matter of opinion, it would seem to us that you are indeed violating 2 John 9 by continuing to fellowship Highland through other efforts. But it doesn't end with just Highland. There is a broader application that consistency will demand. (7) How can you fellowship the good brethren who support the works of Preaching the Gospel and G.B.N.? If they were engaged in some type of unfruitful works of darkness in this matter, would the same not also apply to those who do support these works. If, as you indicate, that by supporting these efforts Northside would be joining hands in a cooperative work with those who are tearing the church apart, are not those who support these works then doing that very thing. (8) Furthermore, if you continue to fellowship the good brethren who support these efforts and who do not agree with your conclusions in this matter, are you not doing that very thing you imply that we are doing by joining hands with those who support these works? May we remind you that brother B.J. Clarke spoke in your meeting and he along with the Southaven church are involved in GBN. The Southaven congregation is financially supporting G.B.N. Brother Clarke has already recorded several programs for the network and will also be hosting his own program. Furthermore, the Memphis School of Preaching has

endorsed this effort. They promoted it in the Yokefellow, and showed the DVD during a general assembly approximately one month after it showed at Freed-Hardeman. Obviously, they did not think that we solicited unfaithful brethren at the Freed Lectures. The Forrest Hill congregation that oversees the MSOP supports this effort. They are going to be airing their worship services on the network. Also, brother Cliff Goodwin, who is on your lectureship program for the fall, has voiced his support of this effort and for Preaching the Gospel. The Bremen congregation has supported Preaching the Gospel from the very beginning, even though they cannot pick the programming up in their area. Several of those who work with Truth for the World out of Duluth have been very supportive and helpful in bringing this work to fruition. I guess what we are saying is that if you continue to narrow your circle among good and faithful brethren, before long you may find that you are the only ones in your circle, and the course you good brethren seem to be following, if consistently pursued, will eventually leave you alone in your own circle.

We have affirmed from the beginning that this is a matter of judgment, not that the doctrine of fellowship is a matter of judgment, but that your application of it to these matters are a matter of judgment. We will affirm again, we do not endorse or fellowship any apostate congregation, and that our policy in this regard is no different than Northside's in receiving unsolicited funds in the general collection or in a specific work of the church such as a library.

We are on the verge of launching one of the great works of recent times. Many faithful brethren are enthusiastic over this effort. Northside, being so centrally located to Highland and the offices of GBN, could have been active in financially supporting the effort and in using your evangelists in doing some recording for the national audience, however, you have made it quite clear that you have no desire to participate. And the reasons you give are inconsistent with your own practice at Northside. We believe this is sad and regrettable. We would hope that you would reconsider, and join sound brethren in this effort, but nevertheless, that is your decision. We certainly have no ill will toward any congregation that chooses not to support our mission efforts. There are many mission efforts that need support. However, the circumstances of your lack of support are troubling to us to say the least. It is very difficult to maintain a good relationship with brethren who will not support your efforts because they are casting doubt on your faithfulness.

The Highland Elders

ITEM #10

On September 23rd Dave Miller issued a statement regarding his role in the controversy surrounding his error/involvement with “R/R” of elders and MDR as it relates to “intent”. Sadly brother Miller’s statement serves no objective purpose in clearing up this matter but rather serves to muddy the waters further.

Before reading Dave Miller’s statement we would recommend you arm yourselves with the scriptures listed below. Keep in mind the issue before us is not about personalities or who likes who but it is about obeying and following the TRUTH that will save our souls in Judgment. We are engaged in a spiritual battle of WORDS – TRUTH versus a LIE. We must keep in mind the warnings found in the scriptures about those who would pervert the Gospel of our Lord.

Our Lord said “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” (Matt 7:15).

“Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” (Matt 10:16).

Paul said, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” (I Thes 5:21).

John said, “BELOVED, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (I John 4:1).

Paul said concerning the duty of an elder, “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” (Titus 1:9-11).

Paul said, “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.” 2 Corinthians 11:12-14

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.” Romans 16:17-18

“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. 2 John vs. 9-11

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. John 8:31-32

“Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:” Exodus 23:2

On 9/23/05 Dave Miller issues the following statement:

For Honorable Brethren Who Sincerely Want to Know

The vast majority of those in our great brotherhood who encounter rumors and hearsay choose to believe the best about their brother, suspending judgment until verification is forthcoming. They sincerely want to believe and hope the best about their brothers and sisters in Christ (I Corinthians 13:7). *For the sake of these dear brethren*, and in the spirit of Proverbs 18:17 (“the first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him”), I wish to offer a brief word of explanation and clarification concerning the allegations and accusations that are circulating.

“Elder Reaffirmation”

I do not believe in the “reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders” as my critics have defined the concept.

I do not believe that elders should be temporarily appointed and their “terms” only continued on the basis of an arbitrary vote of the membership.

I do not believe that a congregation has the right to use any procedure that expels qualified men from the eldership.

What I **do** believe is that elders have the authority to solicit from the congregation the congregation's desires regarding who should serve them as elders.

The specific instance at Brown Trail **in 1990** entailed a process that was instigated and executed by the elders themselves. The elders appointed Johnny Ramsey, two instructors from the school of preaching, and me to do the “leg work,” but it was **the elders themselves that initiated the process and implemented it** from beginning to end. The issue boils down to a single point, illustrated by two questions: (1) Does an elder (or preacher, deacon, Bible class teacher) have permission from God to request the members to give him their feedback regarding whether they think he is qualified to continue to serve and/or perform his job properly? (2) And does that elder then have the scriptural right to decide whether he will remove himself on the basis of the response that he gets from the members? The few passages that have anything to do with the selection and ongoing qualification of officers in the church (e.g., Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 5:17-20), imply that the congregation has the right to participate in the appointment (i.e., “evaluation”) of their leaders. The process or method by which an individual is deemed to be biblically qualified is not spelled out in Scripture. It is therefore a matter of expediency that falls within the God-granted **authority of the elders**. Those who have turned this issue into their pet hobby are the very ones who are tampering with the authority of elders.

While I am not aware of any unscriptural actions having occurred, I was not in any way involved in a completely separate procedure implemented at Brown Trail **in 2002** by a different eldership that was then in place. I had already resigned and was in the process of moving to Alabama. It is astounding that an event that occurred **15 years ago**—an event that I have neither repeated nor promoted since—should cause such a stir!

M,D,R as it Relates to “Intent”

It is unnecessary for me to explain my views regarding what the Bible teaches on the overall subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. I have taught on this subject for many years and my views are a matter of public record, having been permanently documented in lectureship manuscripts, school of preaching classes, a tract I wrote on the subject, a section in *Piloting the Straits*, numerous sermons I have preached over the years, articles in brotherhood journals, and television programs recorded for “The Truth in Love.” My views are the same views held by the faithful segment of our brotherhood: one man for one woman for life with fornication being the one and only exception by which the innocent party can put away his/her mate and remarry.

However, several years ago an incident occurred in the school of preaching where I served as director. One of the staff members was found to have gained entry into the U.S. several years earlier (before he became a Christian) at the behest of his cousin who had concocted a plan by which they would “marry” on paper in order to defraud the U.S. government to achieve his entrance into the U.S. As soon as the conspiratorial goal was achieved, they planned to put through the paperwork to end the “marriage.” When the elders and I became aware of this situation—which had occurred years earlier—we confronted the brother, who acknowledged/confessed the incident and expressed a penitent attitude. The elders then assessed the situation and decided that he would be allowed to continue in his capacity with the school and church. The elders counseled him to rectify these past mistakes to the extent that he was able to do so. They also cautioned him regarding his marital status, but no official pronouncement was made concerning his future eligibility for marriage in view of the fact that he was single and not entertaining any prospect of marriage. The entire affair was laid to rest to the satisfaction of the eldership. Five factors that the talebearers of the brotherhood consistently fail to include in their widespread reporting of this circumstance is (1) the woman who offered to accomplish his entry into the U.S. was **his cousin** (illegal in and of itself); (2) the two never did anything to indicate that they actually **intended** to be married or viewed themselves as such (i.e., they did not live together or enter into any relationship or arrangement that could even be remotely construed as marriage); (3) the woman had been married before and was **not eligible to remarry**; (4) the woman is **dead and has been deceased for many years** (cf. Romans 7:1-3); and (5) he remains **unmarried** to this day.

Totally separate and apart from this incident which occurred in the 1990s, I was asked by the elders to participate in a Wednesday evening Summer Series program in 2001 in which the preachers of the congregation formed a panel and fielded questions from members of the auditorium class. One question posed the hypothetical situation in which two people conspire to defraud the government in order for one of them to gain entry into the U.S. In a completely off-the-cuff response to the question. I pointed out that there must be mutual intention for a marriage to take place. I gave as an example (poor as it may have been) a situation in which a person is kidnapped and drugged only to wake up days later to find that he is married—with no recollection of having gotten married. He did not consent/intend to be married. [Another example would be Hollywood actors making a movie in which their characters get married. They speak the vows and say everything that would ordinarily be said at a real wedding. Yet no one thinks they actually get married—since their intention is lacking.] These incidents, in which I responded “off the top of my head” in an attempt to offer input on the submitted question. have been latched onto and blown all out of proportion to make it appear as if I’ve abandoned Bible teaching on M,D,R and am out counseling hundreds of people to remarry. They claim I advocate that a marriage is not a marriage if either party had “mental reservations” when they married! I categorically deny ever having said, implied, or believed such a thing. My spur-of-the-moment remarks do not contradict my continued belief that two eligible people who are

married can divorce only on the grounds of fornication, with the result that the fornicator is not eligible to contract another marriage. Yet, this extremely rare, unusual, unique situation is being held up as a “false doctrine that threatens to undermine the very foundations of marriage”!

May God bless us all in our efforts to be faithful to Him, and to do His work without the distractions of unnecessary division.

Dave Miller
Montgomery, AL
9/23/05

PS: In addition to the above misrepresentations, I have been astounded that in the last 3-4 years, additional FALSE rumors have circulated about me, including the following:

1. That I believe in instrumental music in worship
2. That I stole money from Brown Trail (a charge dispelled by an IRS audit)
3. That I had an affair with a woman
4. That I believe in the doctrine of annihilation of the soul
5. That I am dead

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On 10/04/05 Dub McClish issues the following (Revised) response to the Dave Miller statement:

A RESPONSE TO BROTHER MILLER’S STATEMENT

I am glad to see that brother Miller has finally addressed in print the accusations many of us have made against him for a long time. I have read brother Miller’s statement, and I have some observations:

1. His condescending attitude is evident in the title of his statement. He suggests that those who dare question his doctrine or practice is "dishonorable" and "insincere," and that those who do not accept all of his explanatory statements are "dishonorable," "insincere," and wilfully ignorant. He obviously does not think well of those who dare question his doctrine or practice.
2. He based Brown Trail’s implementation of the reevaluation/reaffirmation (hereafter r/r) procedure in 1990 on the claim that the elders themselves “initiated,” “instigated,” and “executed” the program. To argue that a practice is authorized merely because fallible elders decide to do it is very dangerous ground. A large number of unauthorized and erroneous practices, which elderships have “initiated,” “instigated,” and “executed” characterize many congregations nowadays. “Eldership authorization” and “Scripture authorization” may be and sometimes are vastly different. Liberals argue that women may lead prayers or preach in mixed adult assemblies **if the elders themselves “initiate” and “instigate” it.**
3. I do not know about other "critics," but I have not defined brother Miller’s r/r doctrine for him in what I have written about him (1997 Bellview Lectures book, *Leadership*). I simply quoted him and let him define what he believes and advocates concerning the practice. I believe he has attempted to erect a straw man here, of which he can easily dispose, of course. He needs

to come face-to face-with what he taught and helped implement, rather than accusing others of inventing things about him.

4. I have never suggested (nor have I seen it suggested by others) that Dave Miller believes in the practice of "term limits" or stated terms for elders, at the end of which they must submit to the r/r procedure. This is another straw man.

5. If he does not believe "that a congregation has the right to use any procedure that expels qualified men from the eldership," why did he advocate and help implement a procedure that could do just that? In the "Rationale" (prepared and issued by the Brown Trail r/r committee, of which brother Miller was a part), issued to help "sell" the congregation on the r/r program it implemented in 1990, we read the following: Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow. Even if a man is technically qualified to be an elder, if the membership where he attends does not perceive him as a leader whom they respect and trust, he cannot shepherd effectively. Brother Miller said the same thing in his sermon on April 8, 1990, from the Brown Trail pulpit. The admission that an elder who is qualified may be removed simply because a sufficient number of members choose not to follow him or do not "perceive him as a leader" is a glaring and exceedingly dangerous addition of Sacred Scripture. To "perceive" one as a leader on its very surface is a subjective evaluation. This, in effect, adds another qualification to those Paul specified in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. 6. Brother Miller cites Acts 6:3 as if it favors his r/r case. All this passage does is furnish the principle that the whole congregation is to be involved in the selection of elders and/or deacons. One searches it in vain to find some intricate reevaluation process of men who were already selected, appointed, and serving. Acts 6:3 does not help his cause.

7. To use 1 Timothy 5:17–20 as authority for the r/r practice is to engage in eisegesis rather than exegesis. To say that a man should be removed because "25% of the congregation doesn't want to follow him," "doesn't like him, or "doesn't perceive him as a leader" is not in this passage or any other. 1 Timothy 5:17–20 does not help his case. Obviously, brother Miller would have used additional passages to justify the r/r process if he could have found them.

8. To accuse those who dare question brother Miller's advocacy of r/r as thereby pursuing a "pet hobby" is purely pejorative terminology, intended to bias uninformed readers against those who sincerely question his doctrine and/or practice. The hurling of such terminology has for years been a favorite ploy of liberals, and it is certainly unworthy of the author of the fine book, *Piloting the Strait*.

9. We who deny the existence of Scriptural authority for the r/r process are not the ones who tamper with the authority of elders, as he charges. Rather, those (whether or not they are elders at the time) who form committees (such as brother Miller was a part of) are those who tamper with the authority of elders **by becoming de facto "elderships" while the r/r procedure runs its course**. The existing elderships and their respective congregations in such cases **must subject themselves** to such committees for the plan to operate.

10. If brother Miller was not involved in the 2002 r/r procedure at Brown Trail, why did he help Maxie Boren (Brown Trail preacher at the time) defend the practice to brother Dub Mowery (nativeheritage@peoplepc.com), who journeyed all the way from Drumright, OK (near Tulsa, where he preached at the time) to Brown Trail (about 300 miles) to express his objections to and concerns over their 2002 version of r/r?

11. Brother Miller seeks to place the Brown Trail practice of r/r in the realm of "expediency." This appeal to "expediency," however, overlooks an elementary principle of Biblical

hermeneutics: Scriptural authorization must precede expediency. No matter can be expedient unless it is first authorized, and the Scriptural authorization for this practice has not been and cannot be produced.

12. Why is brother Miller "astounded" that an event that occurred 15 years ago could cause such a "stir"? Surely, he is aware that the mere passage of time does not transform sin into righteousness or error into Truth? Repentance, rather than the passing of time, is necessary for correction and forgiveness. My guess is that he has likely preached this principle to others through the years.

13. Brother Miller denies he has "preached or promoted" this practice since 1990 (clearly, an admission that he "preached" and "promoted" it then). Brother David Watson has observed his influence encouraging this practice in a congregation near him in recent years, contrary to his disclaimer.

14. If brother Everett Chambers and his cousin "never did anything to indicate that they actually intended to be married or viewed themselves as such (i.e., they did not live together or enter into any relationship or arrangement that could even be remotely construed as marriage)," how did their actions help him get into and stay in the U.S.? Did they not have to go through some sort of wedding ceremony and did they not have to affix their signatures to an application for a marriage license and then do the same on a marriage certificate? Were not these actions on the part of both of them actions which indicate "that they actually intended to be married," even though their purpose in doing so was a conspiracy to "defraud" the authorities? Was not the full intent of both of them to become legally married so as to enable him to enter and remain in the U.S.? Had they not indicated to the authorities (by going through required marriage procedures) that they desired to be married, they could not have accomplished their purpose. They may not have viewed themselves as married, but the authorities did, else they would not have had to "put through the paperwork to end the 'marriage'" (generally called "divorce"). I have the same difficulty justifying this "I didn't intend to" doctrine that I do in justifying the Roman Catholic doctrine of "mental reservation."

15. Is brother Miller implying in the statement above that a man and a woman are not married at the time they are pronounced husband and wife, but that they must "live together" before they become married? If, after being pronounced "husband and wife" in the eyes of both civil and Divine law, Bob and Sally, on the way from the wedding site to the place of their initial act of intimacy, Bob dies of a heart attack, were they never married?

16. What is the relevance of the woman's being ineligible to marry brother Chambers because they were cousins? Is he arguing that had she not been his cousin, their defrauding the immigration authorities would have been acceptable?

17. That the woman had been married before and was not eligible to remarry does not alter the fact of their conspiratorial intent. Is brother Miller attempting to argue that had she been eligible to marry, the deception would have been justified? If this is not his point, I missed it.

18. That brother Chambers was not a Christian at the time he and his cousin "accidentally" married is hardly relevant, unless one wishes to argue (as many false teachers do) that one's marriage relationships before he becomes a Christian do not "count," and that baptism takes care of such unscriptural unions.

19. Whether or not brother Chambers "remains unmarried to this day" is not the issue. The issue is, does brother Miller believe/teach that brother Chambers has a Scriptural right to remarry?

20. So far as I know, neither brother Chambers nor his cousin whom he married was kidnapped or drugged and therefore pronounced "husband and wife" against their wills or while in a drugged stupor. They were quite conscious of what they were doing, fully intending deceptively (yet nonetheless actually) to marry each other. Nor were they actors in a movie, but they deceptively "acted out" a live drama, with full intent to satisfy civil marriage laws so as to deceive the U.S. Government.

21. I have never suggested or heard anyone suggest that brother Miller has so "abandoned Bible teaching on MDR" that he is "out counseling hundreds of people to remarry." If anyone is doing so, he should stop. Also, if anyone is doing so, let brother Miller produce the evidence of such or stop his accusation.

22. It is good to see brother Miller's forthright declaration of his position on who is eligible to marry, divorce, and remarry. However, he then diminishes the impact of that position statement with a significant "However, several years ago the following..." exception, describing the behavior of Everett Chambers. After describing it, he then concludes: "Yet, this extremely rare, unusual, unique situation is being held up as a 'false doctrine that threatens to undermine the very foundations of marriage!'" It matters not how "extremely rare, unusual, unique" the situation with brother Chambers may have been and may still be. If one (including brother Miller) justifies and excuses this practice in one person, then he must logically and consistently do so for all persons. If (a) brother Chambers did what brother Miller says he did (legally married his cousin), and (b) if he did it for the reason brother Miller says he did it (to defraud the U.S. Government, lying in order to circumvent U.S. immigration law), and (c) if, as brother Miller believes, brother Chambers and his cousin were not really married because of their lack of "intent," then (d) "the very foundations of marriage" are indeed thereby threatened.

23. Brother Miller refers to those who have dared challenge his strange MDR position relative to brother Chambers as "talebearers of the brotherhood." Would liberals, whose errors he exposed so well in *Piloting the Strait*, be accurate in characterizing him as a "talebearer of the brotherhood"? I doubt that he would think so. Neither do I believe that he is accurate or fair in thus characterizing those who are not content to let his errors pass.

24. Brother Miller's statement will doubtless be more than sufficient for those who have defended him through the years. They will now begin saying that he has "cleared up" and "corrected" all of those accusations. However, for my part, I see no substantive answers to any of the nagging doctrinal questions he has created. I find his statement to be a very weak and self-serving one. Some may even suggest that I will not be satisfied unless "he crawls over shattered glass" and "bathes my feet in tears," but they will be as wrong as wrong can be. While I require no such thing, I do wish he had forthrightly repented of (instead of denying) his errors.

—Dub McClish
October 4, 2005

On 10/06/05 Dave Watson issued the following review of Dave Miller's "statement":

A RESPONSE TO DAVE MILLER'S "REPLY"

On September 23, 2005 brother Dave Miller wrote a "Reply" that he titled: "For Honorable Brethren Who Sincerely Want to Know." Brother Dub McClish has correctly observed: "His condescending attitude is evident in the title of his statement. He suggests that anyone who dares question his doctrine or practice is 'dishonorable' and 'insincere,' and that those who do not buy all of his explanatory statements are 'dishonorable,' 'insincere,' and willfully ignorant."

Brother Miller begins by placing those who oppose and expose his errors into a minority "in our great brotherhood." He implicitly (and falsely) charges that they "choose to believe the" worst "about their brother," that they render a "judgment" before "verification is forthcoming" and that they do not "want to believe and hope the best about their brothers and sisters in Christ." This same tactic was used by brother Frank Chesser when he falsely charged that brother Dub McClish possessed a "judgmental, censorious, self-righteous, unforgiving spirit that characterizes a small and diminishing group of brethren in the church." It was used again by brother Joseph Meador when he falsely charged that brother McClish is one of "a few who are in a small, but no less toxic, loyalty circle...a small negative faction, who if they gain control, will only rupture fellowship in the church even more than they already have." It was further used by brother Curtis Cates who falsely campaigned that: "brother McClish's reputation had been ruined and that if he remained as editor [of *TGJ*] the paper would die." It was finally used by brother Barry Grider who charged brother McClish with "viciousness" and "falsehood" and claimed that he "did not deserve nor need to be in the position he was in." Brethren Miller, Chesser, Meador, Cates and Grider are all attempting to "poison the well" concerning those who point out their errors so that the uninformed will think that such allegations are unverified and that the accusations are only "rumors and hearsay."

"Elder Reaffirmation"

Brother Miller denies that he believes in the reaffirmation and reevaluation of elders. His testimony is: "I do not believe in the 'reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders' as my critics have defined the concept." But, let us call another witness. Brother Eddie Whitten was a member of the Brown Trail congregation serving, for many years, as director of the school of preaching and also as an elder until he "left there under very distasteful and distressing circumstances in 1989." He writes:

We, the elders at Brown Trail, unfortunately allowed two men to be appointed as elders, who gave the "right answers" to questions asked in interviews with them, who revealed their liberal leanings as soon as they were appointed to the eldership. The next 3 ½ to 4 years became an ongoing contest to retain the Biblical integrity of the Brown Trail church. The eldership was divided to the point that we were stalemated and could not effectively function for the good of the church. After that much time had elapsed under those trying conditions, one of the "good" elders had to resign for health reasons. That left the "liberals" in control. With the apparent intent of remedying the situation, Dave precipitated a confrontation between the two factions. The obvious result was that the liberals forced me to resign (actually minutes before being fired) and Ed Clark followed suit in the next couple of days. The men of the congregation demanded a meeting to explain what was going on. It was in that meeting that my respect for Dave Miller vanished.

In the months preceding my resignation, Dave had expressed his concern to me about the views of the most vocal of the liberal elders. He mentioned to a young couple in the congregation just

two weeks prior to the above event how dangerous this man was. There were about a hundred, or more, in the meeting the men requested of the elders. In the course of the meeting someone asked me to give my side of the story. I related that there was liberalism in the eldership and in the faculty of the school of preaching. They asked me what I meant by the term “liberalism.” I answered that things were being advocated such as (1) authorizing women deacons, (2) all of life is worship, (3) no authority for elders except by example, and (4) praying to Jesus.

After I had returned to my seat, Dave spoke up and stated, “I don’t see anything liberal about these men!” I could hardly believe my ears! He destroyed my case and my respect for him. The result was that now there were only the liberal elders left.

Within the next six months, there was, at his suggestion, a “reevaluation of the eldership.” In a tape that I heard myself, Dave stated that 1 Timothy 5:19 was authority for reevaluating an eldership. I know where the tape is, and I think it could be made available if desired. In my judgment, 1 Timothy 5:19 is addressing the case of an elder who is guilty of sin and who will not repent. It has nothing to do with reevaluating or reconfirming an eldership. Ballots were passed out to the congregation for their vote. The existing elders were not to see the results, only the five preachers that were at Brown Trail and the School of Preaching. The result was that three of the four remaining elders were ousted by the congregation. Two other men were appointed at that time. Dave had accomplished his mission! He had remedied the stalemate by grossly unscriptural means.

We now call upon brother Dave Miller to give testimony against himself. He has already done so in a sermon preached at Brown Trail on Sunday morning April 8, 1990. In that sermon he explained to the congregation the process of reevaluating and reconfirming present elders. Notice these nine statements from that sermon:

1. “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.”
2. “We[ll], 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 it is right or wrong—but I am concerned about what the Bible teaches.”
3. “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(s) in [at] the first, can remove them.
4. “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?”
5. “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 mind set, 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.”
6. “And if I, or anyone else in a leadership sort of capacity, no longer sustains the respect from a sizable portion of the flock, for whatever reason, the proper attitude would be to remove oneself from that position.”
7. “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."

8. "Present elders would need to receive sizable support from this congregation."

9. "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."

The above statements, from brother Miller, clearly show that he has defined the concept of elder reaffirmation/reevaluation himself. These statements show that when brother Miller says, "I do not believe in the 'reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders' as my critics have defined the concept," he is lying. They also show that when he says, "I do not believe that elders should be temporarily appointed and their 'terms' only continued on the basis of an arbitrary vote of the membership," he is stating a falsehood. They further show that when he says, "I do not believe that a congregation has the right to use any procedure that expels qualified men from the eldership," he is stating another lie. Finally, these statements show that when he says, "the specific instance at Brown Trail in 1990 entailed a process that was instigated and executed by the elders themselves," and that "it was the elders themselves that initiated the process and implemented it from beginning to end," he is not being accurate.

Elder Reaffirmation at Brown Trail

Brother Miller recognizes the distinction between additional elders being added and current elders being reevaluated, reaffirmed or reconfirmed when he says in statement 1: "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." After covering "the question of how elders ought to be selected" he then moves, in statement 2, to "this idea of reevaluating current elders or reconfirming" them. In statement 3 he sets forth the criteria by which current elders are to be reevaluated, reaffirmed or reconfirmed. He says: "the principle is that if the membership finds fault with an elder, the membership who put the elder(s) in [at] the first, can remove them." In statement 4 he defines what he means by the word "fault" saying: "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." He maintains that a man who has been made an elder by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28) and is currently serving as an elder, qualified according to the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1 – 7; Titus 1:5 – 9; 1 Pet. 5:1 – 4), but has "lost his standing with enough of the members" should "voluntarily remove himself" from office. He further maintains that if he will not "voluntarily remove himself" from office "the membership who put the elder in [at] the first, can remove [him]." And "how do you determine" if a currently serving, Scripturally qualified elder has "lost his standing with enough of the members" so that he should "voluntarily remove himself" from office or be removed by the members? Brother Miller answers: "you ask the members how they perceive that man as an elder of the church."

The apostle Peter said: "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies..." (2 Pet. 2:1). Brother Dave Miller is a false teacher who is trying to privily bring in a damnable heresy. Brother Guy N. Woods wrote: "Privily (*pareisago*) means to slip in by the side of, and indicates that these teachers had artfully and slyly introduced their false doctrines by the side of truth in such a fashion as to deceive those who had accepted them." Brother Miller is artfully and slyly trying to introduce a new qualification for currently serving, Scripturally qualified elders. This new and unscriptural qualification has to do with how an elder is "perceived." Notice these quotes from brother Miller:

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.

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.

What follows then [is] 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 how do you determine that unless you ask the members how they **perceive** that man as an elder of the church?

Brother Miller falsely claims that in addition to the Scriptural qualifications, which a man must meet in order to become an elder and must maintain in order to remain an elder, there is something else to consider. He falsely claims that the man must be one that the members “perceive to be a leader.” He says that the man must be “perceived by that flock as a shepherd.” He again adds that the membership must “perceive him a leader.” He specifically states: “that one of the qualifications of a shepherd is that the membership perceive him to be such.” Then he falsely concludes that “you ask the members how they perceive that man as an elder of the church.” The one he designates as “that man” is a currently serving, Scripturally qualified shepherd of the church.

But let us try brother Miller’s new, unscriptural qualification on the “chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4). Even though Jesus Christ is qualified, in the eyes of God, to be our “chief Shepherd” would brother Miller claim that He must also be “perceived” by His sheep to be a leader and that He must be “perceived” by His flock as a shepherd? Brother Miller stated: “Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow.” Does the fact that some sheep will not submit to and follow the lead of the “chief Shepherd” indicate that He “cannot shepherd effectively”? The fact that some sheep will not respect and trust the “Shepherd and Bishop” of their souls (1 Pet. 2:25) does not disqualify Him nor does it disqualify a currently serving, Scripturally qualified shepherd or bishop. If members do not perceive a Scripturally qualified elder as a leader they are at fault, not the elder. If members will not submit to a Scripturally qualified elder then they are sinning. “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that [is] unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). If members will not follow a Scripturally qualified elder then the members are in violation of Scripture. “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of [their] conversation” (Heb. 13:7). If the members do not properly perceive a Scripturally qualified elder as worthy of respect and trust then they lose their standing before God for Paul commanded: “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. [And] be at peace among yourselves” (1 The. 5:12 – 13).

Brother Miller’s false doctrine has disrupted the peace of congregations across our great brotherhood beginning at Brown Trail but not ending there. His statement 5 said: “No one should be

threatened by the prospect of being evaluated, not a one of us.” He then went on to name “the preacher...School of Preaching instructors, the elders, the deacons and all of us members.” He overlooks the fact that elders have the rule over preachers, instructors, deacons and all members (Heb. 13:17) and that this reaffirmation/reevaluation process takes that rule away from currently serving, Scripturally qualified elders. He correctly points out that “the Lord is going to evaluate us one day.” Does brother Miller believe that Scripturally qualified elders will be judged unfit for heaven because in addition to the qualifications found in the Word of God (which will judge all of us [John 12:48]), they were not properly “perceived” (as defined by brother Miller) by the members?

In statement 6 brother Miller makes this astounding claim: “And if I, or anyone else in a leadership sort of capacity, no longer sustains the respect from a sizable portion of the flock, for whatever reason, the proper attitude would be to remove oneself from that position.” He claims that not only must currently serving, Scripturally qualified elders “sustain the respect from...the flock” but such “respect” must be “from a sizable portion of the flock.” He later defines the sizable portion to be 75% of those who voted. He further claims that if such “respect” is not sustained “for whatever reason” the “proper attitude would be to remove oneself from that position” as an elder. *For whatever reason* would allow “unruly and vain talkers and deceivers...whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake” to replace an elder who is “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Tit. 1:9 – 11). Of course, if the elder did not voluntarily remove himself from office the members, according to brother Miller, could do so. His heresy is indeed damnable.

In statement 7 brother Miller again indicated a distinction between selecting new elders and reaffirming, reevaluating or reconfirming currently serving, Scripturally qualified elders. He said, “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.” Notice that this determination is to be made on the basis of what the members “think” in spite of the fact that these elders may be Scripturally qualified. Then, in opposition to the fact that the Bible says: “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses” (1 Tim. 5:19) brother Miller says: “You won’t be asked to sign that form [this point was later changed], 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.” Notice again that this determination is to be made on the basis of the “feelings” of the members. And how would anyone know if those feelings were “in light of what the Bible teaches”?

In statement 8 brother Miller again refers to his arbitrary “sizable support” yardstick: “Present elders would need to receive sizable support from this congregation.” Remember again that this “sizable support” figure was set at 75% of **those who voted**, not 75% of the membership, which could make a big difference in the outcome.

In statement 9 brother Miller announces that “once those [forms] can be sorted out” (i.e., votes counted) “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.” How were the presently serving elders to be appointed or ordained if they were not viewed as having resigned their positions? This procedure therefore necessarily includes elder resignation in addition to elder reevaluation/reaffirmation. Even if they had resigned (which is nowhere indicated in the explanation of the process), and they were to be reappointed or reordained, such would still constitute elder reevaluation/reaffirmation or reconfirmation, which is what brother Miller stated he did not preach or practice. His own sermon shows he is lying.

Conclusion

Brother Miller concluded his recent statement of explanation regarding elder reevaluation/reaffirmation with the following questions: The issue boils down to a single point, illustrated by two questions:

(1) Does an elder (or preacher, deacon, Bible class teacher) have permission from God to request the members to give him their feedback regarding whether they think he is qualified to continue to serve and/or perform his job properly?

(2) And does that elder then have the scriptural right to decide whether he will remove himself on the basis of the response that he gets from the members?

I agree that a currently serving elder has “permission from God” to request feedback regarding whether the members think he is Scripturally qualified to continue to serve and or perform his job properly. Also, the members have “permission from God” to give him feedback regarding whether or not they think he is Scripturally qualified to continue to serve and/or perform his job properly. If they conclude that he is Scripturally qualified to continue to serve and/or perform his job properly, then he can do so. If they conclude that he is not Scripturally qualified to continue to serve and/or perform his job properly, then they must follow 1 Timothy 5:19. Accusations are to be received before two or three witnesses, as opposed to being secret or anonymous. The accused elder also has “permission from God” to respond to the accusations and defend himself. If the accusations are not **Scriptural**, then the elder can continue to serve and/or perform his job properly. If the accusations are **Scriptural**, then the elder, if he refuses to repent, should remove himself from the office of elder. If he will not repent and remove himself from the office of elder, then the congregation should remove him.

Brother Miller's own statements show that he believes in the reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders, per the accusations against him. He is the one who has defined the concept, but the process or method that brother Miller has spelled out for the resignation and/or reevaluation, reaffirmation and/or reconfirmation of currently serving, Scripturally qualified elders is **NOT** found in the Scriptures. It is therefore **NOT** merely “a matter of expediency that falls within the God-granted authority of the elders.” He believes that elders should be temporarily appointed and their terms only continued on the basis of an arbitrary vote of the membership “since the complexion of a congregation in terms of its membership can change over a period of time” and because “an eldership may conceivably no longer consist of the same individuals that the membership would look out from among themselves and appoint.”

He believes that a congregation has the right to use a procedure that expels qualified men from the eldership when only 26% of the members **who vote** find fault with them “for whatever reason.” Brother Whitten’s statements and brother Miller’s own sermon show that the specific instance at Brown Trail in 1990 entailed a process that brother Miller instigated and executed and that it was **NOT** “the elders themselves that initiated the process and implemented it from beginning to end.” Fifteen years later we see from his reply that it is brother Miller who has turned this issue into **his** pet hobby. **He** is the one who is tampering with the authority of elders, and more importantly and dangerously, with the authority of the Word of God.

David B. Watson
October 6, 2005

ITEM #11

Northside church of Christ Calhoun, Georgia Special Announcement - November 30, 2005

"Open Letter" To our brethren at Northside and to all those who love Truth...

October 30, 2005 will be remembered as a tragic day in the history of the Lord's church in Whitfield and Gordon, County. On that particular day the elders of the Highland church of Christ in Dalton, Ga. executed their final action in marking and withdrawing fellowship from the elders of the Northside church of Christ in Calhoun, Georgia. The action is tragic because of the reason the withdrawal was implemented upon the Northside eldership. The withdrawal was the final result of the Northside elders voicing opposition, written and verbal, to the Highland elder's embracing of a marked false teacher, Dave Miller.

The current issue actually began with the decision of the Northside elders to rescind the invitation of brother Barry Gilreath, Jr., to speak on the "Forth Annual Lectures" at Northside. Once that decision was made, and due to the fact that conflicting reports, accusations of inconsistency and charges against the Northside elders of trying to destroy GBN began coming to the attention of the Northside elders, we decided the best way to face the charges fairly was to let the facts (correspondence between Highland and Northside) speak for themselves. For this action the Highland elders falsely accused the Northside elders, in a meeting on 10-4-05, of "grievous sins."

The great tragedy resulting from the action of the Highland elders will have far reaching consequences. Their action will further splinter an already fractured brotherhood, mainly because of their decision to embrace and promote a well documented false teacher, Dave Miller. Not only do they embrace Dave Miller, they now defend his false doctrine. Truly the words of the Lord are applicable to the Highland elders, "which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel" (Mat. 23:24). They bid God speed to the erring and attempt to mark/withdraw from faithful brethren who dare oppose them or disagree with their opinion on how to best deal with a conflict.

The following communication is in reference to the Highland elders "statement" which was read (by Barry Gilreath Sr.) in a meeting we had with them on October 4, 2005 and their "Open Letter" dated November 17, 2005 which was mailed to area congregations. October 2, 2005 brother Gilreath called one of the Northside elders and requested a meeting between the Northside elders and the Highland elders on October 4. After relaying this request to the other Northside elders we agreed to meet on said date with one request. We asked the Highland elders if we could record the meeting, but they declined our request. We had decided to meet with them anyway, hoping we could resolve some of the issues between us because of the AP/Miller controversy. Brother Gilreath began the meeting by reading a prepared statement from the Highland elders, after which we met for three hours. We respectfully disagreed with

their charges and their demands that we repent of sin. At least five times during the course of our meeting, brother Gilreath, told us to repent of sin and of causing division. We told them, each time, that we not only respectfully disagreed with their charges, but they were the ones who had committed sin with their endorsement of AP/Miller and the divisive way they were handling this issue.

We were surprised they had made such a bold decision to withdraw fellowship so quickly, and without prior warning and time to discuss the issue further since this was our first and only face to face meeting with them. To mark and withdraw fellowship is a very serious matter with long term effects. Needless to say we were heart sick to hear of their unscriptural plan. After our meeting it was clear we were still as far apart as ever on all the issues. We had not changed our position on any of the decisions we had made. Our resolve was and is to stay the course. However, we decided to keep the Highland elders' "statement" confidential for a while, in order to allow time for emotions to settle down and to see if our three-hour meeting might have softened hearts any.

This communication also relates to the action of the Highland elders on October 30, 2005, in which they announced their withdrawal of fellowship from the Northside elders. And, on November 17, 2005, they wrote an "Open Letter" to area congregations announcing their marking and withdrawal. Our explanation (at the end of their correspondence below) of the Highland "statement" and "Open Letter" will serve as the statement of our position as it relates to their aforementioned unscriptural withdrawal of fellowship. Our prayer is that this material will serve to inform those who are sincerely concerned about the direction the Highland elders have taken and that it will be a platform for further discussion which, hopefully, will help Scripturally settle the current controversy.

We have no intentions of continuing this word battle with Highland nor do we plan to participate with them in any of their programs or activities until they make the necessary corrections.

Please feel free to use this information but only for the purpose of shedding light on this controversy. We pray that recipients of this material will be honest and wise in their use of this information. The issue before us is not a "game" and we do not want these documents to be used to promote "brotherhood politics" or "personal agendas". The controversy before us is very serious and should not be taken lightly. We believe souls are at stake.

Brethren we are engaged in a great spiritual battle. As elders of the Northside congregation we are prepared to "stand in the gap" and not allow error to penetrate the precious body of our Lord here. Our duty, as elders, is to hold fast to faithful words that we may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. The Bible teaches that "there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." (Titus 1:9-11). "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works." (2 Corinthians 11:12-15)

We will not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shall we speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment (Exodus 23:2).

The Northside Elders

The following "Statement" was read by Barry Gilreath, Sr., at the beginning of our October 4th, 2005, meeting:

October 04, 2005

We have asked the Northside elders to meet with us tonight for several reasons that will become apparent in the following paragraphs.

Let us first be clear that we do not begrudge your personal views regarding any of the questions that have been raised and addressed in recent times. Your views are exactly that to us....your views. You are certainly entitled to draw conclusions and make determinations as leaders of an autonomous congregation. Though we strongly disagree with your deductions, we defend your right to differ and your decision to not support our efforts to evangelize the lost. We have no ill will towards any congregation who elects not to participate for whatever reason. That includes Northside. Also, our comments tonight are not in any way directed towards, cast a reflection upon, nor should it be inferred that we are in any way at odds with brother David B. Smith or the good members at Northside [sic]. We understand that they know and act in accordance with the information you choose to provide them. The Northside congregation is composed of many faithful and truth loving people. David B. Smith is an outstanding Gospel preacher, for which we know that you are thankful. Having now addressed these preliminaries, let it be understood that our concerns and comments tonight are directed toward the Northside eldership alone. The following comments have no application to either brother Smith or the Northside membership. We are particularly commenting on the deeds and words of the Northside elders, specifically Terry York, Bobbie [sic] Hall, and Ron Hall.

We are very much aware that you have circulated three packets of information to numerous Christians over a period of weeks in an attempt to draw as many brethren [sic] into the issues of disagreement that have evolved. We have copies of all three packets. One of these packets provided the accusations brought against brother Miller and AP as dated 8/28/05. We understand that this information was circulated to the Northside members. You have also circulated a second package that included the private correspondences between the Highland elders and the Northside elders regarding questions you had raised to us surrounding brother Miller and AP. We know this distribution was at least in part at the hand of brother Ron Hall to various preachers and/or elders at a recent lectureship in Morganton that he attended. It is dated 8/8/05. You have also circulated a third packet containing these personal correspondences, as well as our private letters to and from the Northside elders dealing with your questions regarding the reception of funds. This packet was dated 8/15/2005. We know that the third packet of materials was prepared for the Northside members and was marked "Confidential Material" on page 41. We are also aware that you have received the Dave Miller letter in recent days setting forth his response to the accusations that the Northside elders and certain others have been parroting. The response by brother Miller contains some of the information that we had learned in our meeting with him, when we were trying to provide a fair and unbiased hearing of the facts in our investigation of the matter. We had presumptuously assumed that you too would have wanted to be aware of such before casting the wand of judgment. However, recent events have convinced us otherwise.

The Highland elders have scrupulously attempted to oversee the work of GBN and be faithful to the truth. Our decisions to accept or reject programs or persons have nothing to do with big programs or monetary support. They have everything to do with being fair and not allowing

"brotherhood politics" to enter therein. We have prepared a lengthy questionnaire that we require regular speakers of programs to answer before consenting to air program material. We have already rejected what seemingly was good programming because of the basis of answers given on the questionnaire. Any implication or charge of the Northside elders to others that our decisions are based upon compromise for big programs, money or friends is an insult and without any substantiation. Such talk only escalates emotions and produces further division. Any decisions we have or will make are only after prayerful consideration of the facts at hand.

Furthermore, we had sincerely hoped that you would have indeed kept your commitment to discuss this matter with brother Miller personally, as you indicated to us that you would do promptly in your last letter, even the very week of your lectureship. Since it is now obvious to us that this is not a priority of the Northside elders, and in light of the recent facts that have come to our attention, specifically that in your men's business meeting a couple of weeks prior to your lectureship, brother Hall affirmed numerous times that you already "have all the facts", and too that you (the Northside eldership) have "no respect" for brother Miller, it is clear to us and, we believe also, to fair minded brethren that you had indeed already pre-judged the matter, and were not truly interested in considering thoughtfully and with an open mind, what brother Miller had to say about these accusations. Though you may indeed after this meeting tonight, arrange such a meeting with brother Miller, we are now of the opinion that any such discussions between the Northside elders and brother Miller would only be symbolic at the very most, and would not be in [sic] conducted in the spirit of fairness, where truth seekers are seeking clarification and resolution. There is not one in this room tonight who would want to stand before such a judge knowing that he had already pre-determined your guilt? [sic] Not a one could have confidence in a process of such a group of partial jurists who make known in advance of any hearing that they have "no respect" for the one being tried, as you did of brother Miller. It is a shame that citizens of the United States of America would have greater respect for a fair and impartial hearing in our courts, that [sic] has been demonstrated by the Northside elders in this process. Even if you were correct in every accusation that you have brought forth, your biased actions and prejudicial words have brought no credibility to the process whatsoever, and in fact have only discredited it.

Additionally, the attempts to discredit, undermine and hurt those who have tried to be fair and impartial in this process are irreprehensible [sic]. The Northside eldership has played a starring [sic]role in this orchestration. Your escalation of activities has created a great rift in the fellowship that should exist at this time between our congregations. We have heard with our own ears, via tape, the Northside elders pounding upon the pulpit of self-righteousness, and we are disheartened that you have chosen to "look down" upon good brethren who have disagreed with your conclusions at this point in time. Are we to allow your assessments to be the standard used in overseeing these works?

Furthermore, your packets of information that you have been parading throughout the area have done a great disservice for the cause of peace and unity. A portion of your packets contained information that was privileged. Certainly you viewed it as such since the Northside elders asked permission via brother York to print one of our private correspondences for distribution. We denied the request, not wishing for our written discussions to be used for any personal agenda. Needless to say, we were amazed to learn that the Northside elders reproduced all private written discussions, with the obvious exception of a letter we wrote to you dated April 28th, 2005. For some reason, this letter was not included in your packet to your members. Our letter to you was dated ten days following your. [sic] Its absence implies that there were no other correspondences between the Northside elders and the Highland

elders until the recent matter arose concerning AP. Of course this is not true, and unfortunately without its inclusion, you did not fairly and completely represent our concerns.

Though we are not aware of any laws that were broken in the distribution of our private correspondences, it was at the least unethical and absolutely a breach of trust. Since you asked permission to print one of these documents, you obviously understood such. We did not realize that we needed to copyright our written discussions with the elders at Northside to protect the sensitivity and privacy of our letters. This is precisely why we have elected not to have our discussion tonight recorded as requested by brother Hall. We have absolutely no confidence in the intents of the Northside elders, who have proven from past and present actions that there is an agenda at work of destroying the works of GBN and Preaching the Gospel. Any written discussions we have had with you were not done so that you might use such for strife and division. Yet that is what you have done. Likewise, our part in this meeting tonight is not to provide fuel for the flames of destruction. Our purpose from the outset of any discussions has been to address questions that have been raised by the Northside elders out of consideration for a congregation that we had considered our closest friend and ally in the North-Georgia area.

Brethren, we have been greatly disturbed, immensely disappointed, and severely hurt over the gossip, innuendoes, rumors, breach of trust, divisive actions and the such like that have roots within the Northside eldership. We had expected better of our friends. *"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me (Psa. 41:9)."*

Proverbs chapter 6 teaches us that God hates the one who sows discord. This is exactly what has occurred through your actions and words in handling this matter. Though such tale bearing may make tantalizing reading and talk for those who thrive on such, we are confident that the Lord is very disappointed in you. You have allowed the Devil to take a situation that he could not convince brethren over the past 16 years that such rose to a level of division, and within a few months you have participated in the Devil's "tsunami" of destruction, designed to weaken the church and keep her from evangelizing the lost in an unprecedented means. Needless to say, we take his attack very serious, [sic] and will not be silent. Though you must have believed that your packets and campaign to discredit our efforts to save the lost via GBN and Preaching the Gospel would gain you some victory at our expense, you will sadly reap what you have sown.

The Bible says to mark those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine you have received. How ironic, that in your campaign to mark others, you have yourself become a victim of your own unbridled pursuits. You have sown discord, promoted gossip, and caused an unnecessary breach in the unity of God's people. The campaign that you are pursuing is neither righteous nor noble. Your words and actions betray you. We therefore, call upon the Northside elders, Ron Hall, Terry York, and Bobbie [sic] Hall, to repent, not of your views for they are yours. But we call upon you to repent of the misguided zeal, hurtful actions and words that have been contrary to healing and unity in the body of Christ. *"For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me (Psa. 69:9)".* We would ask that you consider our plea and make amends. This is our prayer. We have no desire to pre-publicize this letter, and will not do so unless the Northside elders choose to reproduce it for other parties. It will remain confidential for the present. However, if you rather resist such needed repentance, we will as the leadership of an autonomous congregation, make this letter public, along with the specific details justifying our charges, and sadly mark the eldership at Northside for your grievous sins.

The Highland Elders

On October 17, 2005, Terry York wrote the following e-mail to Barry Gilreath, Jr.:

Barry Jr.

Yesterday 10-16-05 Bill Rainy informed me that I had three E-mails from you. If you were puzzled as to why I did not respond, it is because I have never opened any of my mail from the church's E-mail address to me. My current E-mail address is tyyork@aol.com (this may be changing this week as I am debating whether or not I want to go to high speed). I could detect your frustration in your third E-mail to me so I just wanted to let you know why I didn't answer you.

But, as to Dave Miller's position on MDR, if ever there was a doubt as to what he believes and teaches he made it clear in his statement he sent abroad. I had heard from your dad and others that "the wife had been married before, she was now dead, he had not remarried." I did not know any of that! After learning all of that I was willing to look at the matter further, thinking maybe Miller had not taught error on MDR *(I am not closed minded as some of my good brethren have charged me, nor are my fellow elders at Northside). But if ever there was a doubt about what he believes and defends, he made it clear in his statement, repentance, attack on the talebearers, or whatever that was he has sent abroad. All of those circumstances do not change his position. If none of those circumstances existed he states clearly his convictions in number 2 under his statement on MDR and intent. Now I believe he holds error on the subject.

As to your cancellation on our lectureship, MDR was not the only problem. Miller is a well documented blatant false teacher on elder r/r, he divided the church at Brown Trail, he is a marked (disfellowshipped) brother, he continues to divide the brotherhood by such vague, deceptive statements as he sent out (I received mine about 9-26-05) and by his "good words and fair speeches" will continue to "deceive the hearts of the simple." I am convinced he serves his "own belly." So this is why we will not use anyone who fully, unreservedly endorses such an organization as AP over which Miller is the head.

Barry, have you listen [sic] to Dave Millers [sic] elder r/r sermon and read the material I sent to your dad? If so what do you think?

Thanks

Terry York

** Note: This sentence was changed for clarity. The original read; "(I am not closed minded as some of my good brethren have charged me, along with my fellow elders at Northside)."

On October 17, 2005, Barry Gilreath, Jr., replied to Terry York:

Terry,

Thanks for the reply. I have not reviewed the material you sent to my father. I have listened to the tape of Dave Miller, and reviewed the transcript you provided. I paid special attention to the highlighted portions of the transcript that the Northside elders had highlighted, and if that

were all there were to it, I could see how one might have questions. However, I contend you need to take the whole of the sermon, not just highlighted portions, to fairly represent brother Miller. The other statements he made prior to and before the sections you highlighted provide the full picture of his views. These statements are just as important and clarify his position; especially is such clarified in light of his recent statement.

Terry, others have reviewed the same material and some who had formerly had questions regarding brother Miller, have concluded that there is not sufficient evidence to make such adamant charges, and that even if such charges were true, they would not necessarily rise to the level of division within the Lord's church that has arisen among good brethren. And in all honesty, prior to the fallout at the Gospel Journal, brother Miller wasn't made an issue of fellowship among most good brethren. Brethren were not canceling brethren from lectureships and also canceling their appearances on other lectureships. That alone raises red flags with many good brethren.

I do not intend to speak for anyone, and you are welcome to verify this matter if you desire, but brother Wesley Simmons [sic] in a conference call between him and Barry Sr., and Jim Dearman said about a week ago, that he believed after carefully reviewing all of the evidence and in light of brother Miller's statement, that brethren were going to need to give brother Miller some slack on this matter. He was asked to repeat his statement to make sure they understood him correctly. He repeated it.

The only reason I mention him to you is because I know that you have a lot of confidence in brother Simmons [sic], as do I. The point is, if good brethren such as brother Simmons [sic], who have no reason to be biased, are now concluding that we need to give brother Miller some slack on this matter after they have looked at the "evidence", is it possible, Terry, that the elders at Northside might just be looking at brother Miller with an over critical eye? Could the fact that he spoke at Calhoun might have prejudiced minds in this matter? [sic] I am not accusing, but I am asking, because I do believe you are a fair-minded person. You certainly would agree that it is possible for one to become so passionate about something they perceive as a righteous cause, that their conclusions can be tainted. I know that has application to me, but it also has application to you, Ron, and Bobbie [sic] as well.

Terry, I do appreciate you writing me back. I understand about you not getting my emails. Those things happen. However, please understand that we (the Highland elders) do have "aught" against the Northside eldership. The lengthy meeting we had asked for about two weeks ago was for the purpose of going to our brethren privately to ask you brethren to repent of the discord, false innuendoes, and division that had come from the hand of the Northside elders. Our written statement we read at the beginning of the meeting outlined these matters.

We were not addressing in our statement any of your views regarding brother Miller. You have a right to those views, as strongly as we may disagree with them. However, we do have a problem with the manner in which the Northside elders have handled our discussions, and the unnecessary firestorm you created among your membership. Other brethren from other congregations who had received your packets were also concerned over the divisive actions of the Northside elders and brought this to our attention.

Because of the sin of sowing discord that you brethren engaged in, others under your influence have participated in such activities. There have been false statements regarding my views concerning marriage that have been made to our members via Northside, some of our members have been confronted in public places via Northside with the false accusation that

the Highland church was an unfaithful congregation. This past Sunday one of our deacons told us that he had visited one of our elderly members who had been contacted by a Northside member who told them they needed to leave Highland and go somewhere else, even to the South-Bypass congregation, anywhere but Highland. These are a few examples of the reason we believed it was necessary and right to ask the Northside elders to publicly repent of your participation in undermining the Highland church and elders. Even if you were correct in every fact concerning Dave Miller, I do not understand how that in light of what has occurred, you could continue to maintain that you have been above reproach in this matter.

Terry, I am asking you to consider this matter carefully. I do not believe that you personally intended for such to be the result of the actions of the Northside elders, but nevertheless this is what has occurred. When good intentioned people receive such information as your [sic] provided to your general membership, and then hear subtle accusations from those they respect regarding a congregation such as Highland, such division is bound to be the result.

We do not want to have to make any public statements regarding these matters. We have yet to have any meetings with the general membership, only the deacons. We do not want to publicize the written statement that we provided you. Nevertheless, unless the Northside elders repent of these divisive activities, we will have no choice. We (the Highland elders) can not sit back quietly and allow our leadership and influence to be undermined by such false statements, and divisive activities that are originating from our brethren down the road. It is not reasonable for brethren to expect us to continue to be quite [sic] in this matter while all along we are being targeted by others with false statements, accusations, and innuendoes.

Perhaps, with the public repentance of the Northside elders, some of your members who have been carried away with what they must believe is a righteous cause, will see that such activities are not in harmony with endeavoring to keep the unity of the faith in the bond of peace, and that it is never right to do the wrong thing, even when you are doing something for what you perceive is the right reason.

If we are required after this Tuesday to make these matters public to our members and others, we will be deeply saddened. I can assure you that I will shed tears when such is read in our assembly. Others will as well.

Terry, the ramifications of division among churches are long lived. They often outlive those who were involved in the initial activities. In light of this matter, please consider the importance of making this right.

Thanks again for your email.
Barry Gilreath, Jr.

October 30, 2005, this announcement was read by Skip McNutt (Highland elder) before the Highland congregation withdrawing fellowship from the Northside elders:

Open letter read to the Highland church of Christ October 30, 2005

Dear brethren,

From time to time, we as the shepherds of the Highland congregation must make difficult

decisions in order to meet our obligations to you and the Lord. Such is the case in this announcement tonight.

For well over a year, the Highland elders have had ongoing discussions initiated by the Northside elders in Calhoun. These brethren are Ron Hall, Terry York, and Bobbie Hall. We have at their request been involved in discussing various aspects of the works that the Highland elders oversee, specifically Preaching the Gospel and most recently GBN. We have prayerfully, patiently and thoughtfully considered their letters and comments, and have found them to be the promotion of nothing more than personal matters of judgment.

Yet sadly, these three brethren have determined to make matters of their opinion, matters of fellowship. They have also sought to undermine the Highland congregation through various means. You may or may not be aware of the fact that these three brethren have circulated a number of packets abroad to other congregations attempting to do this very thing. To our knowledge their attempts have had a reverse effect and they have in the process lost the respect of some area brethren because their efforts. We are also aware of Highland members who have been contacted by some under their influence who attempted to undermine the local church and stir up strife. In initiating and leading in such, we are convinced that brother Ron Hall, Bobbie Hall and Terry York have committed public sin and need to repent.

Having received such information of their activities from multiple sources, the Highland elders asked to meet with the Northside elders at their building a few weeks ago to express our concerns and to ask them to make amends through repentance. We had prepared a written statement that we read to them at the beginning of our meeting, outlining the areas of concern. We then discussed the matter with them for about three hours. We asked them several times to make amends in light of the strong warning in Proverbs 6. We asked them to consider our plea for a couple of weeks. Yet we let them know that if a penitent spirit was not manifested by these three brethren within that time period, we would sadly feel an obligation to mark the Northside elders as sowers of discord in accordance with Romans 16:17. A phone call and an email exchange urging them to repent followed the next week.

Tonight, we must sadly report that there has been no repentance made known by these brethren. Therefore, we are left with no other alternative than to do what the scriptures teach and mark these three men for their divisive activities. It is our sincere prayer that in time they will recognize their wrongdoing and make amends for the seeds of division that they have sown.

We do not believe that these three men are bad men. Quite the contrary, we believe that they are good men, yet men with misguided zeal, who have stumbled to sin and allowed Satan to use them to hurt the Lord's church and her efforts to evangelize the lost. We know that you will join with us in your personal prayers in praying for the restoration of these three brethren.

Anytime that an announcement must be made like unto this one tonight, our hearts are grieved. Yet we appreciate the continued support that you good people have and continue to provide us. Though difficult decisions must be made at times, and we are willing to make those decisions, it is encouraging to know that we serve a congregation of people who steadfastly support us in our efforts to do those things that right in the sight of God.

If you have any further questions regarding this or any other matter, the elders are always available to meet with you. Furthermore, a copy of our written statement given to the Northside elders during our meeting is now available in the foyer should you desire to have such.

The Highland elders.

On November 17, 2005 the Highland elders mailed this "Open Letter" to area congregations officially marking and withdrawing fellowship from the Northside elders:

November 17, 2005

Dear brethren,

We regret to inform you that on October 30th, 2005 circumstances required that we publicly marked and withdrew fellowship from three brethren in our area for divisive activities. These erring brethren are Ron Hall, Bobbie Hall, and Terry York. They are the current elders of the Northside church of Christ in Calhoun, Georgia.

Though we in the past have supported, respected and appreciated these men, in recent months events have transpired that has caused unnecessary strife and division through their leadership within the body of Christ in our area.

These brethren have aligned themselves with a small but vocal group within the church that is determined to divide the body of Christ over what the vast majority of sound brethren have determined are matters of judgment. The mindset that has spun such division is no better illustrated than by one of the Northside elders himself, Ron Hall, who has circulated an email that he originally wrote to a preacher in East Tennessee. It is dated 9/26/05.

Your October article for CFTF is excellent. We are in a minority when it comes to standing against the "change agents". The "big name" preachers and big brotherhood projects will no longer go against their supporters who are welcoming all the "change agents". It seems they are polling the brotherhood for whom they can support and associate with and then label those faithful who refuse to go along with them as a **"few who are in a small, but no less toxic, loyalty circle...a small negative faction"**. Kent I commend your article and pray that the faithful will not become discouraged with all the deserters. We have always known that a spilt of some sort was inevitable. I/we just didn't know what it would look like. This may be the big one that we knew was coming. There has always been a remnant who would not bow to the change agents and compromisers. Sadly the lines of division are becoming clearer....

In just a few sentences brother Hall attacked the faithfulness and credibility of much of the faithful brotherhood in Christ. He refers to good brethren as "deserters" and "compromisers". He describes himself and a few others in glowing terms, and speaks of a split in the church that he affirms was "inevitable". Please note that he does not have in mind what is typically described as the liberal element within the church. He is describing good brethren like James Watkins, Curtis Cates, Jim Dearman, Winford Claibourne, Wayne Jackson, and many more brethren and congregations whom are sound in the faith. We have included for your information an endorsement letter for Apologetics Press that was signed by sixty faithful brethren that brother Hall was describing by his disturbing remarks. These brethren are anything but deserters to the faith and compromisers.

For well over a year the Highland elders by request of the Northside elders in Calhoun had

entered into *private discussions* regarding various topics of interest of the Northside elders. Of course we have come to learn since that time, that we were not the only congregation or eldership that these three brethren have attempted to correct over one matter or the next in the surrounding area. We are now aware of other area congregations, elderships, and preachers that they have also contacted to address other matters of their concern. Nevertheless, as far as Highland was concerned these brethren sought to persuade us regarding their opinions involving our oversight of Preaching the Gospel. Basically, these three brethren wanted to determine what congregations we as the overseeing eldership could or could not take support from for this evangelistic work. These brethren wanted us to conduct a religious survey of every contributor/congregation that would send funds to support Preaching the Gospel before any funds could be received. They also decided to scrutinize current contributors and informed us that there were a few churches that in their judgment were not faithful enough to contribute towards this evangelistic work. Of course we pointed out that there is a difference between an unfaithful church and a weak church and that we were not taking funds from any congregation that we knew to have been publicly marked and withdrawn from by the brethren in any local area. We also told them that as an autonomous congregation we, the overseeing eldership, would have to make any final decisions regarding these matters, if such were to arise. Furthermore, we kindly pointed out what we perceived as a great inconsistency on their part in their reasoning. The position these brethren took in our private correspondences, which they have now printed for public distribution, was that a member of the church whom they considered to be unfaithful could contribute a sum of money to the Northside church in the general collection and such was not a violation of fellowship. That same brother could contribute the same amount of money to a work of the Northside church such as to the work of the church library, and such was not a violation of fellowship. However, if that same person also contributed that same amount of money to Preaching the Gospel, then the Highland church violated laws of fellowship by receiving the funds. This was the illogical conclusion these brethren had to assume in order to persist with their criticism of Preaching the Gospel and the Highland church of Christ.

Shortly thereafter in April of 2005, we received another letter from them indicating that they no longer had any interest in continuing the discussions that they had initiated. We agreed and confirmed such with a follow-up letter to these brethren. Within this letter we asked them to address several specific questions related to these inconsistencies, should they choose to revisit this matter at any time in the future.

We had hoped that everything had been put to rest. However, within a few months, brother Bobby Hall, Terry York, and Ron Hall began to pursue yet another matter involving our oversight. It was at this time that these three brethren sought to exercise their judgments in matters pertaining to the new Gospel Broadcasting Network. This time the issue was of whom we should or shouldn't allow to speak on this network. Specifically, we were told that Apologetics Press couldn't be a part of this new effort because the Northside elders objected to the then interim director, Dave Miller. Once again, the Highland elders were faced with an all too familiar situation in which these same three brethren were seeking to impose their judgements on another evangelistic work we were entrusted to oversee, even though the Northside elders had made it clear in previous correspondences that they would not support either of these evangelistic efforts.

As we had previously done in the last series of discussions, we again agreed to discuss this new matter with these brethren as a gesture of Christian courtesy. We considered their concerns and tried to be fair in evaluating the merits of such. Furthermore, one of our elders, Barry Gilreath, Sr. and brother Jim Dearman who is the director of Programming for GBN,

traveled down to Montgomery, Alabama to speak to brother Dave Miller in person regarding the concerns that the Northside elders had raised to us. After the sit down meeting with brother Miller, brother Gilreath and Dearman reported back to the Highland eldership, and we were completely satisfied with brother Miller's response.

However, when it became apparent to Ron Hall, Bobby Hall and Terry York that we would not bend to their judgements in this matter as well, these brethren began to escalate division. They began a packet campaign designed to discredit the Highland church and the works of Preaching the Gospel and the Gospel Broadcasting Network. In part their packets contained the *confidential* letters that we had previously in good faith and out of courtesy written to them in regard to *their* questions. Please understand. They did not have the permission of the Highland elders to make a public spectacle of our written correspondences to them. In fact they had asked permission to reproduce one particular Letter, and we had told them that they did not have our permission to do such because we did not want our letters to be used for anyone's personal agenda. To our surprise, they published and circulated *every* written correspondence we have had with them over the past year or so in an effort to draw as many brethren into this matter as they could. This action on their part was absolutely unethical and a breach of trust that violated basic principles of Bible teaching (Matt. 7:12; Eph. 4:29; Prov 11:13). In addition to this action, some of our members began to receive calls and materials from some under their influence designed to stir strife and division within the Highland congregation. False accusations were made to Highland members regarding the doctrinal beliefs of the Highland preacher and elders. These brethren were told that we believed false doctrine regarding marriage and divorce and that we endorsed the change agent movement. We even know of a few Highland members who were contacted and encouraged to leave Highland and go elsewhere. This attack upon the Highland preacher, elders and the Highland church had its roots of origin within the Northside eldership. These brethren planted the seeds of division in the hearts of those who trusted in them, and they are responsible for the unnecessary wildfire that was the result.

We are thankful to God that these destructive efforts did not have the desired effect upon *any* of the Highland members, nor has such hurt Preaching the Gospel or GBN. Nevertheless, we took these activities very seriously, as you can certainly understand, and could not sit by silently and let a few brethren from one congregation attempt to undermine the local church we oversee and the great evangelistic efforts that that have been entrusted in our hands.

We therefore, asked to have a personal meeting with Ron Hall, Bobby Hall, and Terry York to yet try and handle this matter privately and discreetly. In our three hour meeting with them at their building, we laid out the evidence of division that they had participated in and called upon them to repent, not of their personal views regarding any matters that they had initially asked to discuss with us, but of their divisive activities resulting from such discussions that stirred the waters of strife unnecessarily. We told them that we had no desire to make any of these matters public to either Highland, Northside or anyone else, and asked that they soberly consider our personal plea. It was our hope that they would have a change of heart and apologize for orchestrating efforts that brought about nothing but gossip, false rumors, and unnecessary strife. Yet we also indicated that if they did not repent of this serious doctrinal matter within a given time, we would have no other choice than to warn other brethren of their divisive activities and sadly mark brother Ron Hall, Terry York, and Bobbie Hall as sowers of discord. Our meeting with these three men was to the point, but very cordial on both sides. We then followed up with them the following week with a phone call and then an email exchange. Yet, sadly, there was no positive response to our plea for repentance. Therefore, we sadly fulfilled our commitment in this matter and announced a public withdrawal from these brethren

to our members on October 30, 2005.

The Bible says that God hates the one who sows discord (Proverbs 6). The Lord also has commanded us to mark those who cause offenses to the doctrine you have received and avoid them (Rom. 16:17). Christian doctrine involves a Christian's personal behavior and conduct. It is our hope that these brethren will repent of their public divisive conduct and behavior (1 Tim. 3:15). We have followed the Lord's instructions in this matter. Since a part of their activities included sending out packets to some area churches or leaders, we believed it necessary and appropriate to address their public sin in this public fashion. We have no idea as to all whom they sent such materials to or contacted via phone or email, but we have received nothing but support from those brethren in our area who have contacted us about this matter. We are appreciative of that support and thank you for your prayers and encouragement in the evangelistic efforts of Preaching the Gospel and the Gospel Broadcasting Network.

Shortly after we announced a withdrawal of fellowship from these brethren in our assembly, yet another packet was produced by the Northside elders that is designed to try and illegitimize the scriptural action of withdrawal that we followed. We have reviewed the "new" packet and believe that fair-minded brethren will see it for what it truly is. The Northside elders are now beginning to circulate this material locally and abroad. We received word just yesterday that they had delivered this "new" packet of material by one of their members to a preacher in Mississippi in recent days. Also, just this week we received yet another call from another one of our elderly widows who had received this same packet of information in the mail from Northside. These are only two examples of the many incidents that prompted this scriptural, needed, and just action taken towards these erring brethren.

We understand that the Northside elders have some strong opinions regarding the issues at hand to which we have given great consideration. We have also affirmed to them that we defend their right as the leadership of an autonomous congregation to make those judgments for those they oversee, even if we do not agree with their conclusions. Yet we pray that these three men will one day understand that the means by which they sought to impose their judgments upon the Highland church was harmful, unnecessary, contrary to unity, and resulted in nothing more than discord. We also hope they will soon repent so that their souls might be saved and reconciliation might take place. We have no ill will towards any of these three men. Please understand also that we do not believe that these three men are bad men, but quite the contrary good men who have stumbled to sin in a public fashion and have allowed misguided zeal to cause them to err.

We regret having to send this letter to you, but considering the very public activities of these three men, we believed such to be necessary. If you have any questions regarding this matter that you need to address to the Highland eldership, please feel free to contact us. We appreciate your consideration in this sad announcement and ask that you join us in remembering brother Ron Hall, Terry York, and Bobby Hall in your prayers, that through the observation of this divinely appointed practice, doors will be opened that will eventually bring them to repentance.

The Highland Elders

A brief review of and response to some of the issues raised in the Highland elders' "statement" (dated 10/04/05) and in Barry Gilreath, Jr.'s, e-mail to Terry York (dated 10/17/05) and their "Open Letter" to area congregations (dated 11/17/05) regarding Highland's unscriptural withdrawal of fellowship from the Northside elders enacted on October 30th, 2005.

On November 17, 2005 the elders of the Highland church of Christ in Dalton Ga., sent an announcement to several congregations stating that they had withdrawn fellowship from Ron Hall, Bobby Hall, and Terry York. We, the Northside elders, received our copy of the letter in the mail on November 19, 2005. After reading the statement we were heartsick because of the slander and misrepresentations that had been leveled against us by the Highland elders. Our families, members of Northside and preacher are heart broken at the actions of the Highland elders. In the next to the last paragraph of their letter of withdrawal they state, "Please understand also that we do not believe that these three men are bad men, but quite the contrary good men..." However, the disparaging remarks describing the Northside elders are not characteristic of good men.

The action of the Highland elders is unscriptural in that they attempt to withdraw from the Northside elders and yet remain in full fellowship with the Northside members and preacher. Is it possible to withdraw from the elders of the Northside congregation (only) while the Northside members and preacher submit, serve and uphold the actions of their elders? The Northside members and preacher do not honor the withdrawal enacted by the Highland elders. Neither do other faithful brethren, preachers and elders who know the facts behind their actions. We know of one brother, Wesley Simons, who pleaded with the Highland elders not to make such an impulsive move.

Another reason it is unscriptural is because the withdrawal (according to the Highland elders) were based upon matters of judgment. We contend that to expose error and uphold the Truth is not sowing discord nor being divisive as the Highland elders want you to believe. One brother said it this way, **"Sadly, some in the church would rather accommodate a little error for the sake of "peace" than to be true to God's Word if such loyalty causes contention. Yet, if one seeks to follow Christ, he must militantly defend the church of Christ, even if it does create strife and division. The strife thus created is God-pleasing"**. (The Militant Christ by Barry Grider August 2001 *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL*, page 10ff.) Brethren, strife and division are caused by those who teach and practice error and by those who endorse such.

It may be the case that no amount of explanation will be sufficient to remove the shadow cast upon us by the words of the Highland elders. We will not attempt to answer every exaggeration and accusation made in their statement of withdrawal, just the obvious misrepresentations. Please allow us to briefly respond to the charges made against us by the Highland elders.

(1) The Highland elders stated: **"Let us first be clear that we do not begrudge your personal views regarding any of the questions that have been raised and addressed in recent times. Your views are exactly that to us....your views."** The Highland elders have characterized the doctrinal issues we raised in our letter exchanges regarding the "AP/Miller" controversy and "Giving and Receiving" as it pertains to Biblical fellowship as mere "personal views." They have taken serious doctrinal issues which they have now embraced and made

them matters of personal opinion. This should cause all faithful brethren great concern about the soundness of the Highland elders.

(2) The Highland elders stated: ***“...our comments tonight are not in any way directed towards, cast a reflection upon, nor should it be inferred that we are in any way at odds with brother David B. Smith or the good members at Northside.”*** This statement is nothing more than an attempt to divide the Northside congregation and preacher from their elders. Brother Gilreath, Sr., called Terry York on 10-5-05 and discussed further the issue of whether elder r/r was or was not an expediency. During that conversation brother Gilreath tried to persuade Terry to oppose what the Northside elders were doing, at which time Terry assured brother Gilreath that the Northside elders were united in their decision.

(3) The Highland elders stated: ***“...we understand that they know and act in accordance with the information you choose to provide them.”*** This statement implies that we only give our members partial information so they will see an issue as we think they should see it. We strongly reject that accusation. As elders we are to warn our members of impending spiritual dangers. As members of the Lord’s church we are to “prove all things and hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess 5:21). We must have all the facts and evidence in order to come to the truth. We made information available to our members so they could study and know where to stand in this present controversy.

(4) The Highland elders stated: ***“The Northside congregation is composed of many faithful and truth loving people.”*** To that statement we wholeheartedly agree. We have the utmost confidence in the ability of our members to see the present actions by the Highland elders as unscriptural.

(5) The Highland elders expressed concern over the release of three packets of information we made available to those who were interested in the events/decisions that led up to our lectureship and the subsequent withdrawal of brother Barry Gilreath, Jr.’s invitation to speak. These packets were also made available to some who questioned our decisions (based on the AP/Miller issue) after they had spoken with Miller and had come away with the “opinion” that he was not guilty as charged. We believed the packets served to adequately and fairly answer these concerns. If anyone received one of these packets (by our hand) were offended we apologize. It was never our intent to warn brethren about the Highland/GBN controversy who did not want to be warned. The Highland elders are seeking to create a smoke screen here by charging us falsely with “sowing discord” and “causing division.” Warning good brethren about a false teacher and those who are endorsing such is not sowing discord or causing division among the faithful. Brethren we are commanded to oppose false doctrine and those who teach or uphold such. This is simply following scripture. It seems that when faithful elders, preachers, and others “stand in the gap” against those who are determined to destroy the Lord’s church, the faithful are made out to be the troublemakers. This is an old tactic used by those who refuse to follow God’s Word. We are reminded of Ahab’s charge to Elijah in 1 Kings 18:17-18: *“And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.”*

Before releasing these packets, several preachers had reported to us that brother Gilreath, Sr., and Dearman had approached them, accusing the Northside elders of sowing discord, causing division and trying to destroy GBN. Since these were false charges, and in order to accurately

answer them, we released all the “letter exchanges” we had with the Highland elders to prove that their charges were false. We let the evidence speak for itself.

(6) The Highland elders stated: ***“You have also circulated a second package that included the private correspondences between the Highland elders and the Northside elders regarding questions you had raised to us surrounding brother Miller and AP.”*** Again the Highland elders stated, ***“A portion of your packets contained information that was privileged. Certainly you viewed it as such since the Northside elders asked permission via brother York to print one of our private correspondences for distribution. We denied the request, not wishing for our written discussions to be used for any personal agenda”***. Brethren, this is another smoke screen, attempting to discredit the Northside elders and to draw attention away from the real issue. The Highland elders have chosen to endorse Miller, in spite of the evidence that he is a marked false teacher. The letter in question (the first letter we received from the Highland elders responding to our concern about their endorsement of AP/Miller dated 8/10/05) indicated to us that the Highland elders had some concerns about brother Miller’s soundness. They stated, ***“We are aware of the issues that have been raised and are planning a meeting to discuss such with him. There are some legitimate concerns, though we have heard that he no longer holds the positions he once held regarding MDR and elder affirmation. We do believe that if he no longer holds these views a public acknowledgment would be appropriate. We will be addressing this matter with him in the near future. We had planned to do such prior to your letter.”***

Although we felt the first Highland letter (8/10/05) was not an adequate answer as to why the Highland elders upheld brothers Gilreath, Sr., and Dearman for signing the AP endorsement, we did feel that it said enough to allow them an opportunity to finally look into the controversy surrounding Dave Miller. At this point we were not going to write a second letter.

In their letter (as quoted above) they said they had planned to meet with Miller about the issues surrounding him. We decided to ask Terry York to call brother Gilreath, Sr., on August 17 and ask if we and others who had marked Miller could meet with them and Miller when the meeting was setup. When Terry spoke with brother Gilreath about the meeting, brother Gilreath said that on Monday (8/15/05) he and Dearman had already met with Dave Miller, in Montgomery, about the issues surrounding him. They seemed quite satisfied with what he told them. According to Terry, brother Gilreath said Miller told them that not one of those who have written him up had ever met with him personally to discuss the claims. He encouraged Terry and the other Northside elders to call Miller, saying that he believed we would come away with a different view. This statement was the first indication that we needed to write our second letter to the Highland elders.

The second indication occurred when we asked Terry York to call brother Gilreath a second time to ask him if we could send their letter to others who might be concerned about their endorsement of AP/Miller. (We felt that if we could get their permission to show their letter to others we would not have to write a second letter.) When Terry asked for permission brother Gilreath wanted to know what the letter said. Terry had a copy and read it to him. Brother Gilreath then said, “No”, he did not want their letter circulated but we could “tell” anyone who asked what they said. This was a cause of great concern for us and indicated some sort of compromise with Miller. Therefore the second letter was written.

(7) The Highland elders stated: ***“Though we are not aware of any laws that were broken in the distribution of our private correspondences, it was at the least unethical and***

absolutely a breach of trust.” After additional correspondence, it was clear that the Highland elders had made up their minds to endorse and fellowship Miller, regardless of the evidence. In order to fairly communicate this fact we decided this letter and the entire exchange must be made public so others might be able to make “righteous judgment” in this matter. Information dealing with doctrinal issues (letters, etc.) should never be classified as “personal,” “privileged,” or “private” when souls are at stake, and again, we believe they are. To charge us with being “unethical” and violating a “breach of trust” is another smoke screen to attempt to cover up the unscriptural position the Highland elders have taken in this issue.

(8) The Highland elders stated, ***“...we were amazed to learn that the Northside elders reproduced all private written discussions, with the obvious exception of a letter we wrote to you dated April 28th, 2005. For some reason, this letter was not included in your packet to your members. Our letter to you was dated ten days following yours. Its absence implies that there were no other correspondences between the Northside elders and the Highland elders until the recent matter arose concerning AP. Of course this is not true, and unfortunately without its inclusion, you did not fairly and completely represent our concerns.”*** We never received this correspondence.

During our meeting on October 4th we requested the Highlands elders send us another “copy” so we could include it with this material. We wanted to be fair to the Highland elders and include all correspondence so those who wanted to investigate this controversy would have all the facts/evidence available to them and not have to rely on hearsay. However, the Highland elders said we were not fair and insinuated that we were deceptive since we had not included a letter dated April 28, 2005 in the packet of our letter exchange with them regarding “Giving & Receiving”. Their making this an issue is nothing more than another smoke screen.

When we finally received a copy of their “missing letter” on November 19, 2005 (almost seven months later) we were troubled by what we read. We decided to ask brother York to call Barry Gilreath, Jr. to confirm if this letter was the one they claimed they had sent to us dated April 28, 2005. He unreservedly affirmed that was true. We were troubled and curious how they could have written and sent a letter dated April 29, 2005, and it make reference to events that took place on May 18, 2005, and May 22-26, 2005, approximately one month after they claimed to have written the “missing letter.” See Item# 9 page 58ff.

(9) The Highland elders stated: ***“Brethren, we have been greatly disturbed, immensely disappointed, and severely hurt over the gossip, innuendoes, rumors, breach of trust, divisive actions and the such like that have roots within the Northside eldership.”*** While we agree that the things mentioned above are wrong and do much harm to the Lord’s church, we deny that we are guilty of such. We cannot respond to such accusations based on nothing more than hearsay from the Highland elders. We understand this is a very sensitive and emotional issue and that people will sometimes over-react, exaggerate, and take statements out of context. This has likely happened on both sides of this controversy. We believe everyone involved should be “slow to speak and swift to hear” at all times, but, some “talk” is going to take place. We are facing a very public controversy that affects many brethren and therefore some talk should be expected. Hopefully such talk will be constructive and bring about Scriptural change where needed. As mature Christians we should recognize that fact. For the Highland elders to make such hearsay charges the center of the present controversy/division, is just another smoke screen. We should not allow the “talk/gossip,” “smoke screens,” and “straw-men” rise to overshadow the real issue here: Dave Miller is a false teacher who has been marked and should be avoided (Rom 16:17-18), rather than excused, embraced, and defended. AP has endorsed him in violation of 2 John 9-11. Now

GBN and the Highland elders are in fellowship with this false teacher and the organization (AP) which has taken him in.

(10) On October 17, 2005 brother Gilreath, Jr., (one of the Highland elders), in an e-mail letter to Terry York, made the following statement: ***“I do not intend to speak for anyone, and you are welcome to verify this matter if you desire, but brother Wesley Simmons [sic] in a conference call between him and Barry Sr., and Jim Dearman said about a week ago, that he believed after carefully reviewing all of the evidence and in light of brother Miller's statement, that brethren were going to need to give brother Miller some slack on this matter. He was asked to repeat his statement to make sure they understood him correctly. He repeated it.”*** We did not believe brother Simons was being accurately quoted, so on October 18 we called him and asked him about the statement attributed to him in Barry Gilreath, Jr.'s e-mail. Brother Wesley Simons confirmed to us that he never made the statement attributed to him by Barry, Gilreath Jr.'s. He did say (as Northside elders have said) that we should give some slack to those who are not aware of the AP/Miller controversy, not making this a fellowship issue (with them) until they have had some time to look at the evidence and the facts and then make a decision. As you can see there's quite a difference in the two statements.

(11) The Highland elders wrote in their October 4th statement: ***“Though you may indeed after this meeting tonight, arrange such a meeting with brother Miller, we are now of the opinion that any such discussions between the Northside elders and brother Miller would only be symbolic at the very most, and would not be conducted in the spirit of fairness, where truth seekers are seeking clarification and resolution.”*** We had agreed to pursue some sort of meeting with Miller because the Highland elders had put so much emphasis on this approach as being the way we could get to the truth and clear up the Miller controversy. We had asked brother Simons to be a "neutral party" and represent us (Northside elders) in arranging a meeting with Miller because we believed that, whatever the outcome we would be charged with being "unfair" and "without pure motives" as stated by the Highland elders above. Twice we requested a meeting with Miller (through brother Simons), but he refused to meet with us. After receiving Dave Miller's 9/23/05 statement we no longer see the benefit of perusing such a meeting. (Please see brothers McClish and Watson's review of the Miller statement to understand our decision at this time.)

Additionally, please note that we also invited the Highland elders to meet with some of those on the "other side" (from them) of the Miller issue. We were hoping this meeting would take place and this controversy could be resolved, but they declined our invitation.

(12) Barry Gilreath Jr., in his October 17 e-mail letter to Terry York, made the following statement: ***“...is it possible, Terry, that the elders at Northside might just be looking at brother Miller with an over critical eye? Could the fact that he spoke at Calhoun might have prejudiced minds in this matter?”*** On the Day of Judgment will brother Gilreath tell people who followed an apostate eldership and Dave Miller's endorsement of them that we (the Northside elders) were looking at the Miller/AP controversy with "over critical eyes"? If not before, many will then realize that those who have ignored all the evidence of brother Miller's errors and have encouraged them to do so (as the Highland elders are doing) were far too "under critical" of these matters. To imply that we have "prejudiced minds" against Miller is to deny the facts and the evidence we have clearly presented the Highland elders in this case.

Those who now support and endorse Miller do not want to accept the fact that there were at least three phone calls made to Miller and a packet of information (detailing Scriptural

concerns), sent to him before he came to Calhoun for a meeting in 1999. After endorsing the liberal Calhoun church, he received two additional phone calls and at least two letters (to which he did not respond), voicing concern over his unscriptural actions. With his endorsement of Calhoun, Miller caused precious souls to be lost by encouraging them to stay in an apostate congregation.

Furthermore, to say that Miller was not the center of contention prior to the controversy that involves the major changes relating to *The Gospel Journal*, shows their denial of the real facts in this issue, also. Just because MANY “sound” brethren have appeared on lectureships with Miller (and continue to do so) does not make what he has done right. Numerous brethren wrote brother Bert Thompson when he hired Dave Miller in 2002, alerting him to brother Miller’s errors. Several of these brethren discontinued their financial support of AP at that point because of brother Miller. Our preacher, David B. Smith, refused to speak with Dave Miller back in October 2003 along with other preachers at the Palmetto lectures. We wrote our “Open Letter” in April 2004, addressing the controversy surrounding Dave Miller, to convey to others our concern we had with him. We gave this letter to those preachers who were scheduled to speak at Northside or who had spoken here already, and, had spoken (or were scheduled to speak) on lectureships elsewhere with Miller. David Brown and Dub McClish refused to speak on the Visalia, California, Lectures in May 2004 upon learning that Dave Miller was invited to speak. Brother Miller was subsequently “uninvited” which allowed both of those brethren to then accept the invitation. David Brown turned down a Spiritual Sword invitation in 2004 because Dave Miller was on the program. David told Gary McDade plainly his reasons and McDade went ahead with Miller then and has continued to use him.

(13) The Highland elders have charged us with being “inconsistent” in handling the affairs of the Northside church. We will be the first to admit that being consistent, particularly as it relates to Biblical fellowship, is difficult at times. It sometimes takes a great deal of patience (while examining the facts, all the evidence and talking to the individual[s] in question) to determine the right course of action. We cannot let those who contend that we are being “inconsistent” (because they don’t agree with our decisions in matters of judgment) hinder us from doing what is right when it becomes clear what we should do. God’s Word has much to say on the doctrine of fellowship. God would not have commanded something we could not practice.

(14) It was affirmed in their November 17, 2005 “open letter” that Ron Hall was slanderous toward certain faithful brethren. One of those brethren was James Watkins. However, brother Hall along with the other two elders signed our first correspondence with the Highland elders affirming, “*We believe "Preaching the Gospel" television program is a good and sound work within itself. James Watkins is a faithful and proven Gospel preacher who needs to be heard.*” It is such misrepresentations as this that caused us to release our correspondences we had with the Highland elders over past several months. What brother Hall expressed is what faithful brethren have been saying for years. Apostasy does not happen over night nor does it happen as a result of those who are “extreme” liberals among us. No, apostasy occurs over a long period of time when good brethren begin to wink at digression. When brethren remain silent and refuse to speak out against digression from among our ranks. When we stop contending for the faith and start compromising for peace and unity some sort of division will occur. The late Bill Jackson wrote the following article “Preparing for a Smaller Brotherhood” in the *Christian Worker* editorial; April 1990, page2.

“Before someone tries to rename me, let me state that “I am not Chicken Little, running around crying that THE SKY IS FALLING!” I do not believe that the sky is falling. I do

know that many congregations are fallen, and more will fall; and I know many members of the church have done and are doing the same. Sadly, in spite of all the publicity given to the marks of apostasy in our time, some are still prone to chalk it up to "preacher excitability, and exaggeration." They state that after documentation of more than 160 congregations having had internal problems due to the Crossroads/Boston Movement errors. Some will still say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace..... We do not see how any informed member can doubt it. There cannot be great apostasy and the church still be growing in number. There cannot be all the weakness associated with departures from the faith, and great spiritual or numerical strength at the same time. Having fallen from the "top ten," the church will fall further unless there is, very soon, a turnaround that we cannot now see. In fact, being "in the top ten," and pridefully desiring to remain so, or to climb even higher, no doubt encouraged some to soften all stance in order to be more pleasing unto men, and to gain the numbers that will be so impressive that we'll remain high in denominational favor. After all, the denominational papers and magazines were the ones keeping the count, and some in our ranks wanted to keep these in a favorable mood toward us. But, didn't Jesus warn, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" (Luke 6:26)?

We must then prepare for a smaller brotherhood. When the apostasy has run its course, that's what we'll have. But, it will be a more faithful brotherhood, loving God and loving truth, and still holding onto and preaching exactly what we believed and preached since Pentecost, 33 A.D".

Perry B. Cothan warned, *"The church is in danger of another digression . . . the future of the church is at the turning point,"* and he made a direct "prediction" of evil things to come. [Firm Foundation, 8/92, page 28].

There are many faithful brethren who realize that there is a departure from the Truth taking place today. The late brother Jackson and brother Cotham, and many others, realized this years ago and have tried to warn brethren. Sadly the Highland elders refuse to see the digression now taking place and are now contributing to this digression by upholding such false teachers as Dave Miller and those who now endorse him despite the evidence of his error.

(15) In the accusation that we have "attempted to correct" other congregations, elderships and preachers over matters of "doctrinal" concerns we deny. If they mean we have met and talked to good brethren about doctrinal concerns then we must confirm that we do love our brethren enough to warn them of known Spiritual dangers they may be facing. One of these instances included a meeting at the Adairsville church of Christ on November 6, 2003 with Jerrie Barber who has been marked for teaching "Unity in Diversity." Barry Gilreath Jr. (one of the new Highland elders) applauded our efforts of exposing this false teacher after listening to a tape of that meeting. There were other occasions of such instances that we expressed our concerns where brethren thanked us for doing so (Gal 6:1-2; Eph 5:11). And yes, some have not been so appreciative (Gal 4:16). But we will not turn a blind eye to error, even if it means that some will slander, mark and withdraw fellowship from us as the Highland elders have attempted to do.

(16) The information about our concern with Apologetics Press and Dave Miller in the Highland withdrawal letter is true. We, the Northside elders, expressed our concerns to the Highland elders and they responded by saying, *"Please do not infer from the commendation letter of AP that any endorsement of brother Dave Miller is implied... We are aware of the issues that have been raised and*

are planning a meeting to discuss such with him. There are some legitimate concerns, though we have heard that he no longer holds the positions he once held regarding MDR and elder affirmation. We do believe that if he no longer holds these views a public acknowledgment would be appropriate..." The Highland eldership now accepts and defends Dave Miller's position on marriage intent and elder reevaluation/reaffirmation.

(17) The (only) phone call to which the Highland elders referred on page four of their November 17, 2005 "Open Letter" took place on October 5, 2005. One day, not one week after our October 4 meeting. The phone call was to Terry York in which Barry Gilreath Sr debated the legitimacy of elder r/r. During this conversation Terry York asked Barry Gilreath, Sr. if they still intended to withdraw fellowship from the Northside elders and Barry Sr. said yes. The (only) email we received was a response from brother York's email to Barry Gilreath, Jr. (dated October 17, 2005) which is printed in this material above. The efforts to resolve this controversy by the Highland elders isn't as noble as they want you to believe.

(18) They also state that false accusations were made to the "Highland members" about the doctrinal beliefs of the Highland preacher and elders in relation to marriage and divorce and the change agent movement. One of the Highland members discussed this issue with one of the Northside elders at which time the Highland member was told that Barry Gilreath Jr., and Barry Gilreath Sr., believed the same thing that Dave Miller taught on "marriage intent." For a verification of what the Highland elders endorse on marriage intent and elder r/r, simply ask the Highland elders.

(19) We do not know how many congregations received this announcement of withdrawal. We asked brother York to call Barry Gilreath, Jr., who serves as one of the Highland elders, on November 28, 2005 to try and get a list of the congregations to which they had sent their announcement so we could respond to their charges. After Barry contacted "several" of the other elders he e-mailed brother York back and said they would not allow us to know to whom they had sent their "Open Letter."

(20) The Highland elders do not want to face the real issue here. **Dave Miller** is a **false teacher** who has been **Scripturally marked**, and faithful brethren must **withdraw** from him. That is the real issue. We pray that the Highland elders and others who have winked at, excused and endorsed brother Miller will repent of their blindness before it is eternally too late.

Brethren, as of November 30, 2005 we have been receiving responses from elders, preachers and individuals in our area and from other states concerning the immature and unscriptural actions of the Highland elders. We have yet to have one who is willing to honor the withdrawal. If Highland is true to their commitment they of necessity must also withdraw from everyone who refuses to honor what they refer to as a "just" and "godly" action. The Highland elders may find themselves a recipient of their own words which affirm "... before long you may find that you are the only ones in your circle, and the course you good brethren seem to be following, if consistently pursued, will eventually leave you alone in your own circle."

We hope this explanation has helped you see the real issue.

In His Service,

Elders Northside church of Christ

Bobby Hall
Ron Hall
Terry York

ITEM #12

The Highland/Resaca/Adairsville/Calhoun Connection

Dear Brethren,

We learned on December 6th, 2005 that the Highland elders sent their "Open Letter" of withdrawal, from the Northside elders, to the Resaca Church of Christ, Resaca, GA (3 miles north of our building). This church was exposed by the Northside church of Christ, Calhoun, GA in October 2000 for teaching and upholding error (Article# 1&2). They had an elder (Herb Tennant) who taught, and continues to teach that the instrument in worship is a matter of opinion; a women can lead prayer in the assembly or serve the Lord's Supper; the Lord's supper can be observed on Thursday night or Saturday night; our Lord has already returned the second time (Max King doctrine) and he does not believe in marking and withdrawing fellowship (Unity in Diversity). Although he no longer serves as an elder, he has never been disciplined for his error and is still a member of the Resaca church. The Highland elders knew all of this and had all the documentation below (item# 1 & 2) but chose to mail them their unscriptural withdrawal letter anyway.

The sad results... The Resaca preacher (Ron Ulrey) made a visit to one of our aged and now feeble members this last Monday (12-05-05) and read the Highland letter to him, upsetting him greatly. This aged Northside member used to be a member of the Resaca church (he was one of their elders). He resigned from the eldership because of the problems noted above (which he could not resolve) and because of their continued fellowship with the marked Calhoun church (6 miles south). This aged member continued to attend the Resaca church for a few weeks after resigning from the eldership. In the mean time, it became necessary for the Northside church to expose the Resaca church for their continuing to uphold the error listed above and for their elder (Herb Tennant) trying to teach "unity in diversity" to some of our members. The aged member left the Resaca church shortly after we sent our letter (Article# 2) to the Resaca elders, exposing their error, and placed membership with Northside.

There's more... Two of the current members at the Resaca church are the father-in-law and mother-in-law of the former liberal preacher (Frank Mills) who preached for the Calhoun church at the time of our departure. This preacher was the main leader in the liberal take over of the Calhoun church back in 1998 - 1999. His father-in-law had divorced the wife of his youth several years ago for a younger woman, with whom he later entered into an unscriptural marriage. He attended the Calhoun church during that time (1995) but has now gone back to the Resaca church where his former wife attends (he's still married to the younger woman). This man has never been disciplined for his adulterous marriage and is fellowshipped at both congregations. When they (Resaca Church of Christ) received the Highland letter they immediately began to spread the news to the apostate Calhoun church during their "grand opening" on December 4, 2005 (Article# 3). Now the Calhoun and Resaca members (in their minds) feel justified, in their present apostate condition, since we (Northside) have been marked by the "out of control" Highland elders. This is the same thing that happened back in October 1999 when Dave Miller (being warned of Calhoun's apostasy) came and endorsed them anyway. Just as Dave Miller's endorsement of the Calhoun church closed doors, the Highland elders have now put padlocks on those doors by their unscriptural and careless actions. The Highland elders should not have sent this apostate church this letter. They should be ashamed of what they are doing and the contribution they are now making to the digression we are facing in our area. How sad.

We could share much more with you brethren but we've said enough. We pray that the faithful will look at all the evidence we have provided here and with the two packets dated 11/30/05 and withhold fellowship and any endorsement of the Highland elders until they repent of the destructive course they have taken. We have enclosed a copy of the letter Northside sent the Resaca elders exposing their error in October, 2000 (Article# 2). We have also included three articles that have been written within the last few days (Article# 3-5). Two articles (3 & 4) are very interesting as it reveals another sad day for the Lord's church in Calhoun, GA.

Elders Northside church of Christ
Calhoun, GA

The Highland/Adairsville church of Christ Connection...

On December 13, 2005 the Northside elders received a call informing us that the Adairsville church of Christ (12 miles south of Northside building) had received, from the Highland elders, the "Open Letter" of withdrawal from Ron Hall, Bobby Hall, and Terry York (the Northside elders).

It is interesting that the Highland elders would choose to send a copy of their withdrawal letter to the Adairsville congregation. In 2003 the Highland elders and preacher, Barry Gilreath, Jr., refused to use Steve McCaslin, the preacher for the Adairsville church, in their Summer Series. Brother McCaslin was known for his fellowshiping liberal congregations in the area. When Highland learned of brother McCaslin fellowshiping and participation with the Central church of Christ in Dalton, Ga. they decided not to invite him to participate in their program.

Highland had rightly marked and withdrawn fellowship from the Central congregation in July 2002 for their apostasy. They also refused to receive funds from the Central church of Christ for Preaching The Gospel TV program, stating in their letter of withdrawal from them:

"Again and again, the facts prove that the Central congregation no longer stands for the saving truth that unites us to one another and the Lord (1 John 1:6-7)...

Liberalism is tearing asunder the body of Christ. **We can no longer in good conscience continue to fellowship in the Gospel a congregation who continues to pursue a destructive course of compromise with the truth** (emphasis ours). **We are heartbroken that we have been forced to make such a decision, but in light of the facts and the biblical teaching regarding Christians' obligation to such, we have no alternative (Rom. 16:17-18; Eph. 5:11).** **We will be true to the Lord and His teaching** (emphasis ours). **Congregational autonomy is not a license to trample under foot the Lord's precious church.**" (Emphasis ours)

Because Steve McCaslin refused to honor the marking and withdrawal of Central, Highland refused to allow Steve to participate with them. While we support the actions of the Highland elders in this situation, we must ask, will they be consistent and refuse to use those who are ignoring their withdrawal from the Northside elders?

Also the Highland elders were aware of the fact that the Adairsville congregation had allowed a known false teacher and former "Nashville Jubilee" participant, Jerrie Barber, to conduct a gospel meeting at Adairsville in November 2003. Barry Gilreath, Jr., praised Ron Hall, Terry York and David B. Smith for confronting Jerrie Barber, in a private meeting, which was recorded with three of the Adairsville men present (which included Steve McCaslin) and exposing his error. The Adairsville church chose to allow brother Barber to continue his meeting despite the evidence of his error.

The Adairsville church of Christ has also recently (June 2004) merged with some members of the Adairsville Christian Church. The Highland elders have full knowledge of all of these events and yet they chose to send the Adairsville church of Christ a copy of their letter slandering the Northside elders.

Regardless of the problems surrounding the Adairsville church of Christ the lines of communication between Adairsville and Northside have remained open. However, the effectiveness of our influence upon them has been greatly damaged by the Highland letter. The course the Highland elders continue to pursue by their unjustified cause continues to close doors of opportunity to pull others out of the fire. This is another example of the thoughtlessness and carelessness the Highland elders have exercised in their unscriptural actions.

Northside Elders

ARTICLE# 1

THE RESACA LETTER

The following letter was sent to some of the Northside members from someone from the Resaca Church of Christ. While it was not clear who wrote this letter at the time we mailed our response letter to the Resaca elders, we discovered later that Herb Tennant, one of their elders, wrote the letter. This letter was read before the Resaca congregation on Wednesday night September 27, 2000 by their eldership. We believe you need to consider the spiritual implications of this letter. The Resaca Church of Christ is just three miles north of the Northside building and are in full fellowship and agreement with the Calhoun Church of Christ. **This letter is presented in the exact format it was received.**

To our fellow Christians;

Please read prayerfully and check with your own bible.

Acts 2:47 The Lord added to the Church those who were being saved. God gives us no choice in selecting our church family. He does this for us.

Rom : 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love one another for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Rom: 13:10 Love does no harm to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

John 15:12 Jesus said "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you."

John 13:35 By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.

1 John 4:20-21 If someone says "I love God" and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God must love his brother.

1 John 1:7 If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sins.

Where there is no fellowship, can there be any forgiveness?

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

1 Cor. 1: 10 Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same

thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement.

Matt.13:24-30 We have the parable of the wheat and the tares told by Jesus.

Matt.13:37-43 Jesus explains the parable. We must treat the children of God and those who belong to Satan as equals. God will send Angels to divide them. Don't try to do what God has reserved for himself.

Rom 16:17-18 Now I urge you brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them, for those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.

Matt 4:4 Jesus said "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

John 12:48 He who rejects me and does not receive my words has one that judges him, the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

Calhoun has room for two churches, but without fellowship where are they?

ARTICLE# 2

THE NORTHSIDE RESPONSE TO THE RESACA LETTER

October 15, 2000

TO THE ELDERS OF THE RESACA CHURCH OF CHRIST:

Jerry Bowen & Herb Tennant

Dear brethren:

This letter is in response to a letter received by some of the members of the Northside congregation (September 28, 2000) from the Resaca church of Christ. While it was somewhat unclear as to what the writer was trying to say we have concluded that it was on the issue of "Fellowship". In light of the "fellowship issues" that brought about the establishment of the Northside congregation and the fact that members of the Northside congregation received this letter, we believe it necessary to respond in writing and expose the error as well as the misleading use of scriptures used in the Resaca letter.

Since the author of the "Resaca letter" chose not to identify who wrote it, it was unclear as to whom to address our concerns. However, we have learned that the "Resaca letter" was presented to the Resaca congregation by their eldership on September 27th. Therefore, we are addressing our response to the eldership at Resaca.

First of all, we want you to know that we strongly believe that observing God's Law on fellowship is essential to the well-being of the Lord's church. Violation of God's Law on fellowship is very detrimental to the church, hindering the accomplishment of its God-given purpose. Faithful Christians are faced with a most urgent challenge to uphold God's law and oppose those who do not. It is a sin to fellowship those who are not in fellowship with God and just as serious not to be in fellowship with those who are in fellowship with God.

We can know what is the right and wrong on the fellowship issue when we come to a knowledge of God's word. The Hebrew writer says, "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Heb 5:14). Paul tells us to be wise and not fools "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Eph 5:15-17). We can know what God's will is on the issue of "fellowship" and all other "salvation issues" that we must deal with in today's religious environment.

The "Resaca letter" made it's case for "unconditional fellowship" which is totally contrary to the scriptures. The teaching set forth in their letter upholds the false doctrine of "unity in diversity". Paul said, "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove

them.” (Eph. 5:6-11). It is our desire to reprove [expose] the error of the “false doctrine”, as set forth in the “Resaca letter”, to the saving of souls.

God clearly intended that His "manifold wisdom" be shown by His church, "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). Even before man came on the scene, God had a plan for the redemption of man which involved the church, the church which Christ said He would build (Matt. 16:18) and did build (Act 2).

It is understandable that since the church would play such an important role in man's salvation, God would reveal His plan concerning a number of things which would contribute to the strength and well-being of His church, in carrying out its mission. Among those things of such great importance would be that of FELLOWSHIP. God's instructions concerning fellowship and other matters, which are an integral part of His scheme of redemption, constitute His law and are very clearly set-forth in the Bible.

Salvation is not “unconditional”, neither is fellowship. In fact, they are both obtained the same way through obeying the gospel. Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, (1 Cor. 15:1-4). We obey a form of that (Rom. 6:17-18) when we repent of our sins, are buried in baptism for the forgiveness of our sins, and are raised up to walk in newness of life, (Rom. 6:3-7).

As a result of this obedience, sins are washed away (Acts 2:38; 22:16), and we are added to the church (Acts 2:47). This action of the Lord gives us innumerable brothers and sisters with whom to enjoy fellowship. So fellowship with the saints is obtained when one is baptized for the forgiveness of his sins. We do not earn it; no body of men rules upon it; it is one of the blessings God grants us when we obey Him.

Does one automatically retain that fellowship, regardless of his actions? The maintaining of one's fellowship also parallels one's salvation. Just as it is false to reason "once saved, always saved," so would it be erroneous to conclude "once in fellowship, always in fellowship." One would only have to read 1 John to see the “false view” on fellowship as presented in the “Resaca letter”. John begins this epistle by emphasizing the marvelous fellowship that Christians have with the Father and the Son (1 John 1:1-4). Throughout the letter, however, John points out various limits to fellowship.

In 1 John 1:5-7 we learn that fellowship may be maintained or lost, depending on whether or not we walk in the light. If we choose darkness, we lose His fellowship. A Christian cannot practice sin (1 John 3:4-9). Those who do so are out of fellowship with God. We must practice righteousness to remain in God's favor. That means, "loving not the things of the world the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life." (1 John 2:15-17). The church must withdraw fellowship from all who allow various forms of darkness to overtake them for Paul said, “ But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” (1 Cor. 5:11-13).

Not only is moral error a form of darkness; so is doctrinal error. John says that one who says, "I know Him," but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:3-4). There is a commandment to "repent and be baptized" (Acts 2:38). But some who have never been baptized for the forgiveness of their sins say, "I know Him, I have accepted Jesus as my personal Savior." They have not obeyed "that form of doctrine." They are not walking in the light; they remain in spiritual darkness. Even the true child of God, however,

cannot succumb to doctrinal error and retain salvation. Notice the charge given to the preacher: "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save yourself and those who hear you" (1 Tim. 4:16). Now what will happen to those who do not give heed to their doctrine (and those who listen to them)? Obvious conclusion, they will be lost!

Repentance is essential to keeping God's fellowship, 1 John 5:16-17. The sin that leads to death is the one of which we refuse to repent and continue to practice. We must teach and practice the truth on this to remain in fellowship with God and be saved.

We maintain fellowship if we know Him; we can only claim to know Him if we keep His commandments, 1 John 2:3-5. If there is no earnest effort to be obedient in all things, there can be no fellowship (Matt. 7:21-23). Keeping His word is the means by which we know we are in Him. (1 John 5:1-3).

In 1 John 4:1 we read that there are false prophets with the wrong spirit teaching false doctrines. If any abide not in the doctrine of Christ, they are not to be fellowshipped (2 John 9-11). Do these principles apply only to those who deny the Deity of Jesus? Acts 20:30, 1 Timothy 1:18-20, 2 Timothy 1:15 and 2:16-18 would suggest otherwise. We must believe and practice the truth with respect to doctrine. No doubt many who have presented false doctrines refuse to confess them (1 John 1:8), repent of them (1 John 5:16-17), or back away from them due to intense pride (1 John 2:15-17).

God will not fellowship with us if we do not walk in the light (morally and doctrinally); if we refuse to obey Him and do not keep His commandments (Matt 7:21), if we love the things of this world and practice sin; if we fail to repent of and confess our sins; and if we do not love our brothers in the proper way.

Fellowship is not determined subjectively by what human beings think about it. God determines who is in fellowship with Him and who is not. His objective criteria have been set forth in the scriptures. We dare not put more restrictions upon fellowship than does the Bible nor ignore those God has revealed to us. Our responsibility is to recognize the beauty of Christian fellowship and the limitations God has placed upon it.

Fellowship, is a major subject affecting the church both positively and negatively, and is worthy of our most serious consideration. Due to so much misunderstanding as to the meaning of fellowship it is needful for us to get a clear understanding of Biblical fellowship. Five Greek words are translated "fellowship" or by a word meaning the same. Koinonia or its equivalent is used twenty times in the New Testament. Thayer defines it as: "Fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse, collection or contribution." Other Lexicons use such words as: "Partner, associate, sharer, companion, one who takes part in something with someone, give or contribute a share."

It needs to be understood that fellowship is not only a state or a condition, but an activity. Verb forms of the Greek words are used as well as nouns. Some have held the erroneous view that fellowship is just a relationship one comes into when becoming a Christian, and that matters of doctrine can just be disregarded. This allows fellowship with all manner of things which are contrary to God's will, and therefore sinful.

Fellowship has the meaning of one or more of the following: 1) Joint participation with others in religious activities. 2) Supporting or encouraging a religious activity by bidding "God speed." 3) Partaking in activities of other congregations. 4) Participating with preachers, teachers, and members in such a way as to indicate approval of whatever matter.

There is a serious misunderstanding of what fellowship involves and therefore disregard for what God's word teaches on the subject. A careful study of God's word, as we have already done, will quickly reveal that we do have a choice in the church we become a member of and that we have considerable control with regard to maintaining it. We can extend fellowship, or we can withhold or withdraw fellowship. We can be excluded from fellowship by God or by the faithful in Christ when we go astray and will not repent of our wrongdoing. There is no question but that the practice of God-approved fellowship is one of the greatest blessings which can characterize the individual Christian and congregations. God-approved fellowship is vital to the purity of the Lord's church and the progress of a congregation. This is also a most important factor in the spiritual growth of the individual.

Even when God's word commands the withdrawal of fellowship from those in error who will not repent, it is for the well-being of the church. The ideal result of such action is the restoration of the one who has transgressed God's will. If the withdrawal of fellowship doesn't bring one to repentance, it still serves a good purpose in that it excludes from the fellowship the individual who is bringing reproach upon our Lord's church. Many congregations today tolerate sin in their midst without opposition.

Those who are faithful in Christ should do all within their power to encourage more God-approved fellowship among themselves. There is power in unity, and with the onslaught of the liberal element within the church which is growing stronger day by day, there is such a great need for the encouragement which can come from Biblical fellowship.

It is hard to understand why some brethren are willing to allow truth to suffer by offering the poor excuse that they didn't want to "hurt anyone's feelings." The Lord's feelings seem not to matter, but people do this anyway. Much of the doctrinal error which exists today, and much of it in the church, can be attributed to the failure of knowledgeable and faithful brethren to speak out in opposition to that which is clearly sinful in God's sight. As long as we stand for the truth, we need not fear its enemies – the Lord is on our side. Paul's assurance of victory was based on conditions, but there is no reason why we cannot meet those same conditions and claim victory.

There are so many brethren now who are willing to fellowship virtually everybody who makes any claim of being a Christian. There are those who don't want to give up a building; to give up family or be faced with those who might question them or oppose them for standing against their false ways. There are also those who have fenced themselves in by making laws of their own, which will not allow the fellowshipping of those who are in fellowship with God. Jesus said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matt 16:26). What are you willing to exchange for your soul?"

John says, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ" (I Jno. 1:3). This fellowship begins when one becomes a Christian, never before. In order to continue in fellowship with God, Christ, and faithful brethren there is a condition involved. John said, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I Jno. 1:7). Notice the IF in this verse that makes this fellowship conditional "if we walk in the light". This same principle is stated in a different way in 2 John 9: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."

The above passages rule out fellowship with those who aren't walking or abiding in the doctrine of the Christ. How could anyone come to the conclusion that a Christian can, with God's approval, fellowship anyone who hold the "false-views" of men? God's law on fellowship just doesn't allow it, but some do it anyway, without God's approval. There is only one ground for scriptural fellowship and that is God's truth. The basis for fellowship is as wide as 1 Jno. 1:7, but no wider. Fellowship must not be based on such considerations as: popularity, wealth, feeling, what others do, friendship, or family.

One of the major things that has contributed to unscriptural fellowship in local congregations is the appointment and continued support of unqualified elders. This is a serious problem with Biblical fellowship. Why is this such a problem? First of all in Acts 20:28-30, Paul notes some of the primary duties of elders. As "overseers," they were to "take heed" unto themselves. This would involve serious attention as to their responsibilities in this great work, making certain that they were conforming to God's will in the matter. In the second place, they were told to "feed the flock." Just as a literal flock will weaken and die without food, so will the spiritual flock, a congregation of God's people.

One of the qualifications of an elder is to be "apt to teach" (1 Tim 3:2). As applied to an elder, it means to be "skilled in teaching". This involves the knowledge necessary to teach what the word of God says and not what men want it to say. One can hardly teach what he doesn't believe. Closely related to this qualification is Paul's statement to Titus, "Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." (Titus 1:9). This is highly important.

An elder who holds to the "opinions of men" on doctrinal issues, whether he teaches them publicly or keeps those opinions to himself, cannot uphold the truth as taught in Titus 1:9 since he doesn't hold to the truth himself. It really matters what you believe, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he:" (Proverbs 23:7). If an elder believes you can partake of the Lord's supper on any other day, other than upon the first day of the week; that instrumental music is a matter of opinion; women can serve the congregation the Lord's supper or lead public prayer; a person in an adulterous relationship can be sanctioned by baptism without repenting, and the list could go on, that elder cannot and will not defend the congregation against error.

The congregation who upholds this man is out of "fellowship" with God and cannot be fellowshiped by the faithful. Paul warned by commandment when he said, " Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us....And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed." (2 Thess 3:6,14), see also,(Rom 16:17; Eph 5:6-11; 2 John 9-11). Man's reasoning, without scriptural authority, will not justify you in the day of judgement.

Any man who does not hold the truth in his heart should not be appointed to the eldership in the first place. He does not hold the qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. It does not matter how successful he is or how intelligent. He may be a good man morally, well-liked by all, but he is not and never will be an elder of the Lord's church unless he repents. He must give up these false views and accept God's word (Col 3:17). If it is discovered that a man holds these false views and is already an elder, he should be rebuked and disciplined according to 1 Tim 5:19,20. An eldership or congregation that refuses to deal with this

situation is headed for trouble and eventually spiritual death because they choose to fellowship error and refuse to reprove it as God instructed in Eph 5:11.

To serve as "overseers" effectively, it is essential that elders be knowledgeable and able to teach the truth. Not only is this necessary in order to "feed the flock," but to be able to withstand the "gainsayers" and so protect the flock against this danger. Peter points out that the elders are to "Feed the flock of God . . . taking the oversight thereof." Our salvation is entirely dependent upon our keeping of God's word, just as was the case in the first century. Men have continually sought to change God's word, but all these efforts are in vain and will be as long as time stands. The "doctrines of men" (Matt. 15:9) will never save, but will to the contrary, influence multitudes to leave this world with a false hope, the end of which is eternal punishment of the soul. If we would live eternally (Matt. 25:46) we must never follow a false teacher, and by God's word (I John. 4:1) we can determine who they are.

A great evil has come upon us in that we have failed to let God's word define what true "fellowship" is and who are the "false teachers" among us. We have failed for the most part to allow it to serve as the only guide by which our lives must be lived. Paul said, "if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). As rulers of the congregation, the elders "watch for your souls as they that must give account..." (Heb 13:17). This being the truth, how could any man who holds to false doctrine protect the congregation from the false teachers who hold his same views? This cannot be done! Paul said, " Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." (Titus 1:9). How could this man contend for the faith when he does not hold sound doctrine? He cannot!

We need to be honest with God and with ourselves, and admit that there is a serious problem within the church today due to the lack of qualified elders and a lack of spiritual backbone to correct the problem by the membership. Elders, if they function as God intended, will take their work seriously, always striving to the utmost to fulfill their duties and remain true to the authority of the Bible. When this occurs, the congregations will prosper in spiritual growth and maturity, and numerical growth will result. There will be peace and contentment in the congregation with a stronger desire to be evangelistic.

When the elders do not function properly and hold beliefs that are contrary to sound doctrine in their hearts, whether they bind them or not, that eldership is out of "fellowship" with God. (I Tim 5:19-20; 1 Tim 6:3-4; 2 John 9-11). The congregation that upholds them by remaining silent on the matter is out of fellowship with God. That congregation will die spiritually. The devil will be successful in bringing great hurt and a lack of progress upon the congregation to do the work of the New Testament church.

The apostle Paul wrote the Roman brethren, instructing them to "mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). It is clear that Paul meant to mark those who were guilty as mentioned in the passage, and cease fellowship with them, even though they may have taught the truth on a number of things. Apparently, some of our brethren don't agree with Paul here. For example, a brother believes the Holy Spirit operates directly upon the heart, independently of the word, and implies that God may well save those who have never been baptized, but he does teach the truth on a number of things. Therefore, we can go ahead and "fellowship" him anyway. This error can, if followed, completely undermine God's Law on fellowship. This kind of reasoning has already lead too many congregations into apostasy and out of fellowship with God.

There are other false reasons for teaching “unconditional fellowship” or “unity in diversity”. For many “love” would not allow the withdrawing of fellowship." When this excuse is given there is no accompanying proof from the Bible that this is a scriptural reason for disregarding God's law on fellowship. This is another example of the abuse and misuse of the word "love" as it is so often used in the New Testament. John said, "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments" (1 Jno. 5:3). Jesus said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (Jno. 14:15). Love, in the true sense (agape), will practice God's law rather than disregard it. Let's just do what the Bible says and love God more than we love man or family, (Matt 10:37-39).

The liberal mindset say, "none of us are perfect." We have been hearing this excuse given, as brethren contend that since "we are all sinners" there would be no place for division and withdrawing. This is “unconditional fellowship”. It is wrong to equate the brother who commits some sins while walking in the light, with the brother who is living in open rebellion to God's will. The church in Corinth had problems, but the inspired apostle Paul found a place to start, as he gave instructions to the brethren in his first letter to them, (1 Cor 5).

In some instances God's law is ignored due to various areas of "influence." There is power in influence. That would include: friendships, kinships, wealth, notoriety, and church politics. It is a shame that in some instances when it comes to submitting to God's will, we allow the power of man's influence to have the preeminence. (Matt 10:34-38). This is certainly an abuse of and disregard for God's law on fellowship.

There are times when “fellowship” is withdrawn from by both sides when “personality clashes” occur. The motive of vengeance or personal dislike many times cause division in the Lord's church. We have heard this said over and over as to the reason why many of the brethren left the Calhoun congregation, but this simply isn't true. Vengeance belongs to the Lord and brethren don't have the option of taking vengeance into their own hands. The withdrawing of fellowship is not a matter of "getting even" with anyone. It is a matter of carrying out God's will, (Eph 5:6-11). Personal dislike is not a just cause for excluding one from fellowship although strife and contentions must be corrected within a congregation, otherwise, divisions will occur in the local congregation (1 Cor. 1:10).

How many times have you heard brethren make the statement, you can't withdraw from a congregation? How many times did those same brethren offer Bible proof for their position? A passage which the false doctrine of “unity in diversity” has failed to give due attention, is Romans 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." By what rule can it be said that this doesn't apply to an entire congregation if it is guilty of upholding error? In Ephesians 5:11, Paul says: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." If a congregation is engaged in "works of darkness" or upholds such, it is a violation of this passage, just as it is when one individual is engaged in such. In the case of the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22), Christ did not say one good thing about them, but did say, "I will spue [vomit] thee out of my mouth." Sounds like the whole congregation was out of fellowship with Him. Christ said to the church at Ephesus that he would remove their candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5). If fellowship cannot be withdrawn from a congregation, then there could be a congregation of homosexuals, adulterers, liars, etc., and they could not be excluded from the fellowship of the faithful. The position of “unconditional fellowship” is absolutely false! Contrary to what the “Resaca letter” said, God gives us a choice as to which “church family” [congregation] we are to belong?

There are some who would say that withdrawing of fellowship involves “judging”. We believe that harsh, rash and uncharitable judgments are prohibited by God’s word. A fault-finding spirit is always bad. We cannot judge without hearing the evidence. Christ points out clearly that if we have a beam in our own eye, we are not in position to remove the mote which is in our brother’s eye (Matt. 7:1-5). If we judge righteous judgment as the Lord commands, we will not fear to receive the same kind of treatment. (John 7:24). If we are harsh, unkind and fault-finders we will fear to receive the same kind of judgment. The scriptures instruct us to practice what we preach if we would have God’s approval. Paul asks: “thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?” (Rom. 2:21). We must live in such a way that we can have a right to make righteous judgments, based on God’s word, and withdraw from those in error as the bible teaches us to do. (Rom 16:17).

A necessary condition of fellowship is to be in fellowship with God. (1 John 1-7). In order to know who is “walking in the light” we must be able to judge who they are. Jesus said, “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” (Matt 7:20). How can we know their fruits if it doesn’t involve judging? Jesus gives us the standard for our judging when He said we would be judged by the word of God; “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” (John 12:48). Paul said for the faithful to mark those according to their doctrine (what they teach). (Rom 16:17). Paul commanded, “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. (2 Thess 3:6,14).

Considering the above scriptures, please think! When men will label faithful brethren, who “mark and expose” those who teach and practice those things which are contrary to sound doctrine (which God’s word commands us to do), as “brotherhood watch dogs”, “judges” or “self-appointed brotherhood policeman” are deceiving you. Listen to what Paul said, “Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.” (Eph 5:6-10). “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” (Col 2:8).

We certainly should not judge the heart of a man, this cannot be done. God will judge the secret things of the heart. Paul said, “In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” (Rom 2:16). But, what man teaches and practices openly has already been judged by the word of God and we must heed the warnings and mark and avoid them. (Rom 16:17, Eph 5:11, 2 Thes 3:6,14, 2 John 9-11). When the bridge is out, and we love those who travel down that road, we will do everything we can to warn them of the impending danger so they can avoid it. So it is with our relationship with God and each other, fellowship must be maintained by God’s word, and we must give and heed to His warning signals.

Every informed and sincere member of the church will readily admit that there is a great need for, and much room for, improvement in the area of fellowship within the church. Thus it behooves us to work toward establishing the kind of fellowship among brethren with which God is well pleased. Therein lies the potential for strengthening the cause of Christ as is so urgently needed and upon which the salvation of countless souls depends. We must all recognize the only basis of God-approved fellowship. The fellowship which God approves is always

contingent upon compliance with the teaching of God's word. It must never be based upon anything less than the truth. Not only is this good fellowship limited to God's family, the church (ruling out all non-Christians), it is limited to those within the church who are walking in the light (1 Jno. 1:7).

The Lord's church exists in a very crucial time. The purity of the church in the future will depend in a great measure upon our response to God's Law on Fellowship. There is a most urgent need for faithful brethren to walk hand in hand in God-approved fellowship, encouraging one another in the greatest way possible. There is also an urgent need for the faithful to respect God's law on fellowship, including opposition to those who are engaged in and promoting the evil fellowship which God does not approve. We can fellowship only those with whom God is in fellowship. There has always been and always shall be those whom Peter calls the wicked both within and without the Lord's body. We have the tremendous task as Christians to "be on our guard" for these people. Paul's warning is heard in this regard when he says, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you [be brave] like men, be strong." (1 Cor. 16:13).

Jesus told a parable about the kingdom in Matthew 13 in which He taught that tares or weeds were sown into a man's wheat field. Those weeds were permitted to grow with the wheat until harvest. Christ is dealing with the "Day Of Judgment" in this story. (Matthew 13:38-43). It is clear in these verses that Jesus referred to His kingdom as the whole world. Thus, He truly does have authority over all things, even as He said, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18).

This parable in no way teaches that "we must treat the children of God and those who belong to Satan as equals" as stated in the "Resaca letter". Paul said, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? (2 Cor 6:14-15). He who will twist the scriptures, will do so to his own condemnation as well as those who accept that which he teaches.(2 Peter 3:16).

Christ gives his own commentary on this parable in verses 38-43, "and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil [one]; and the enemy that sowed them is the devil: and the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are angels; therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."

This story sets forth the limitations we are given in exercising discipline and the withdrawing of fellowship within the church. We would look foolish if we tried to discipline and withdraw fellowship from the sinners of the world. We have no authority from the scripture. God will take care of the wicked of the world on the day of judgment. Paul said, "...do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth..." (1 Cor 5:12-13). Those of us who have obeyed the Gospel are not of the world. Peter said, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;" (1 Pet 2:9). Paul said, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Rom 12:2).

Again, Paul made it very clear to the Corinthian brethren that this matter of "discipline and fellowship" was authorized in the church and not the world, when he said, "I wrote unto you in

an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." (1 Cor. 5:9-13).

Jesus, just five chapters over from this parable, gave us guidelines for discipline and withdrawing of fellowship from those who walk disorderly in the church, when he said, "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matt 18:15-17). This sin is to be dealt with as privately as it is private and as publicly as it is public. The scriptures make it clear that "unconditional fellowship" is not taught and practiced in the New Testament church.

Discipline is reserved to those who become disorderly in the "body of Christ" in order to keep it (the church) the pure bride of Christ. As Christians, we are not of this world but have been called out of this world by the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. Again, Peter said; "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light;" (1 Peter 2:9).

The Lord will take care of the disobedient that live in the world. (1 Thess 1:8). However, we must be alert to the "weeds" both within and without the church. Take the advice of Paul and "walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." (Colossians 4:5). As you can see from this study of the parable in Matthew 13 that the "Resaca letter" was misleading and did not teach the truth on the "fellowship issue".

Again, what do we learn from Acts 20:28-30 about the false teachers that will come into the church some of which will be from within the eldership? These men were in error and practiced error. They walk in darkness though they claim to have fellowship with Christ. John said this makes them liars! "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:" (1 Jn. 1:6). We need to know this beforehand, that we might not follow them. We, like Timothy, must avoid them and their error and the "knowledge which is falsely so called." (1 Timothy 6:20). If we get carried away, we too will fall from our own steadfastness! God forbid! Let us do the right thing: "Mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Romans 16:17). To mark them we must know them. To know them we must know their fruits (Matt. 7:20).

We hope and pray that you will consider the things we have stated here and correct the error that has been taught and upheld. Our prayer is that everyone will give serious thought to the problems that have brought about division within the Lord's church in Resaca and Calhoun. Where you stand with God is the most important thing. Our salvation is entirely dependent upon our keeping of God's word, just as was the case in the first century. Men have continually sought ways of salvation apart from adherence to God's word, but all these efforts are in vain and will so be as long as time stands. The "commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9) will never avail, but will to the contrary, influence multitudes to leave this world with a false hope, the end

of which is eternal destruction of the soul. If we would live eternally (Matt. 25:46) we must never follow the doctrines of men "a false teacher", and by God's word (I John. 4:1) we can determine who they are. A great evil has come upon us in that we have failed to let God's word define who is a false teacher and serve as the only guide by which our lives must be lived. Paul said, "if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). We want to have "Biblical Fellowship". The only way this can be accomplished is by going back to the Bible and allow it to be the only standard of authority for what we say and do. (Col 3:17).

We all need to pray for courage. The courage to boldly preach and teach "all the counsel of God." Though compromise is in the air and truth is being sacrificed on a wide scale, we must stand by the whole counsel of God. That means we must preach the word "in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2). This will include the New Testament teaching on the distinctiveness of the one true church, of which Christ is the head and savior (Eph. 4:4; 5:23). No credibility must be given to those who will promote the false doctrine of "unity in diversity". When "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) is declared it may well draw criticism from some of our own brethren, as has been the case with some, but the true soldier of Christ will have the courage and not be afraid to preach it. Paul commanded the Corinthians, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (I Cor. 16:13). The Ephesian brethren were instructed to prepare themselves as soldiers in order to stand against "the evil day" (Eph. 5:10-18). The gospel should be set forth aggressively with a spirit of determination that the truth prevail to the saving of souls. Preaching done with an air of apology and a half hearted conviction will not accomplish what God intended.

Paul warned that men would arise from among the brethren; "speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:30). That time is now upon us. Some will follow those speakers of perverse things, regardless of the course they take, just as the cultists follow their leaders. Preachers of the true gospel, undiluted and uncompromised, need not fear to call the hands of those who will teach or uphold false doctrine, even when they have much influence and many followers.

If you, the elders of the Resaca congregation or anyone who reads this letter, would like to respond or make any comments about what is written here, we would welcome your honest and sincere response. We want to encourage you to put it in writing so all can examine your views in light of the scriptures. We will respond in kind.

The men of the Northside church of Christ

NOTE: The above letter was signed by all the faithful men of the Northside congregation. We never received a response from the Resaca elders nor from anyone directly concerning this letter. This false doctrine is still being taught by Herb Tennant now a former elder but still a member of the Resaca Church of Christ.

The new facility and extra space will hopefully benefit the church's youth programs as well, added Youth and Family Minister Jon Podein.

"We are very proud of our youth," Minister Podein said. "We believe that the youth program is an excellent place to grow and learn whether you are a new Christian, 'born-and-bred' Christian, struggling Christian, or maybe not a Christian at all and just desire to learn and belong to a group of youth members dedicated to providing that very atmosphere of spiritual growth."

ARTICLE# 4

The following article was written in response to the article above. We commend brother Haley for Scripturally responding to this newspaper article.

The Grand Opening of Our New Church

Robin W. Haley

Date: December 7, 2005

The wording of this title may look and sound more like something a denominational "pastor" may say with reference to a building, but it is how a member of the church of Christ described their new plant. This is the way religionists think about their structures built to glorify themselves and make a name for themselves in any given community. These words were taken from a newspaper article that was published in the town of Calhoun, GA quite recently. Worse yet, these are the words as quoted by the so-called Pulpit Minister for the Calhoun church of Christ.

Scott Sides is quoted as saying "We are very excited about this year's Friends and Family Day because it will also serve as the Grand Opening of our new church." For a congregation to plan and implement a Friends and Family day is fine expedient, providing it is in order to teach the Gospel and not merely entertain folks. But this language of Ashdod: "our new church" is something that sound brethren battle and have done so for years. How many times I have had to try to correct the fuzzy thinking of many, including brethren, who believe the building, is the church of our Lord. I realize he may have been speaking in an accommodative manner for the sake of the sectarian readership, but would it not have been just as simple to speak of the "opening of our new facility or building?" But then, knowing how ignorant some brethren are, he may well have the notion that the building IS the church.

Another from this congregation, an elder by the name of Bill Smith, uses this language again in describing the opening of a "Christian" school/academy (whatever that is) "at the church." After all, "Smith said, 'children are one of the reasons the congregation decided to build a new church.'" Poor, misguided fellow!

The article goes on to name a few of the "events" of their Open House portion, one of which is a "performance" by a group called Cornerstone, an a cappella singing group from Faulkner University. Where in the New Testament can one find psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs being "performed" by a group for the entertainment of others? Such songs are a matter of spiritual worship and not to be relegated to the mundane and common. Such is tantamount to blasphemy.

This has been a fault of many so-called "Christian" colleges and universities for years. Far too long have seemingly knowledgeable brethren taken groups of their student bodies to other cities for "mission work" which amounts to nothing more than street concerts. These groups, under the guise of doing the Lord's work, raise funds from gullible brethren to travel to exotic

places and sing on the street corners. Again I ask: where does the Bible teach that we may use an avenue of worship for evangelism? Singing IS NOT preaching the Gospel. Evangelism is not accomplished by allowing sinners to merely “observe” our worship.

A part of their new structure of which these men are obviously very proud was their new “gymnasium/multi-purpose” area. Right! I wonder if this “minister” and “elder” know the etymological origin of the word “gymnasium.” It has to do with an arena where Olympic-type sports were performed...and done so naked. Whereas a gym is a fine place to exercise so long as one is modest in so doing, it certainly is not something for which the Lord’s contribution ought to be used!

Many no doubt will be pleased to know that “the interior of the facility is accented with colorfully stained windows that also enhance the exterior garden and fountain area.” One is made to wonder if they have “mourner’s benches” and “prayer benches” for kneeling upon, and perhaps even “confessional” booths or other trappings of denominations for their people to use and enjoy. My, what an enhancement! Sure would make one’s “worship” more “meaningful.” Misguided folk have been in search of such nonsense for centuries. What is wrong with the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ (2 Corinthians 11.3)? (Just what do they do with this fountain? Is it for drinking or dunking?)

Now we learn why they used their brethren’s free will offerings for such trinkets: we are told “we wanted a very pretty place that **THE COMMUNITY** can use [my emphasis, RWH].” So, they have built this edifice for the community’s benefit. Hmmm! I recall reading something like: “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6.26). They see no problem with using the Lord’s authorized contribution, an avenue for spiritual worship, that which is holy, and using it to please the dogs and swine (Matthew 7.6). Please do not conclude that I think we ought not to have compassion on the lost of this world, but the FACT is, until we teach them the Gospel and they obey it, they have neither part nor lot in things spiritual, for their hearts are not right with God (Acts 8.21)! Our task IS NOT to please them nor provide a pretty place for them to use.

We mentioned their “school” a bit earlier; let me now comment on their desires. One is again quoted as saying “We didn’t have enough room to expand at our former location on South Wall Street, and we wanted to start a school.” There is no sin in starting a school for secular education. And in fact brethren may band together to do so. However, there is no authority for a congregation of God’s people to do so with the funds given through that avenue of worship. This is the same trouble brethren get into when they confuse the church, the bride of Christ, with universities. In this present case, they have her and her mission confused with a school for children. Authority brethren, authority?

Finally, the “Family Minister” Jon Podein comments on the making of these new facilities available for use by several groups or kinds of Christians. Very strange language here. One that struck me as particularly odd was his expression “‘born-and-bred’ Christian.” What in the world is that? None are born Christians! None that I know of are “bred” as Christians. For these people to make a difference in their community in allegedly seeking the lost, they surely are proceeding in an odd, confusing, unauthorized, and accommodative fashion. They will never be able to clearly define to the sinners in their community the distinctive nature of the Lord’s church. But then, I mostly suspect they would rather “fit in” than be too different anyway.

Robin W. Haley rhaley@wideopenwest.com

Note: Brother Robin Haley is the preacher for the Rager Road church of Christ, Columbus, OH.

ARTICLE# 5

AP/DAVE MILLER/TGJ/GBN CONTROVERSY

Ben Justice

Date: December 4, 2005

Over the past several weeks and months, I have been reading over and digesting literally hundreds of pages of documentation, consisting of scores and scores of letters and articles between brethren. I still have more to go. After having read much material, I am convinced that a major division is currently occurring within the body of Christ. Many other brethren are coming to the same conclusion. This division I am referring to is not over the liberal/digressive movement, with men such as **Joe Beam, F. Lagard Smith, Jeff Walling, Steve Flatt, Randy Harris, Jim McGuiggan**, and many others that could be mentioned. The division I am speaking of is occurring between sound brethren and those who are also considered to be sound (at least they used to be). There is simply no way in this bulletin article to cover all of the material I have studied. The main purpose of this article is to inform the congregation at Sullivan of the recent onslaught of compromise presently occurring within the body of Christ. To say the least, it is a sickening and saddening picture. Brethren I have considered to be sound and faithful have now bowed to brotherhood political pressure. This article will be a brief summary of these things. All of this information and documentation is readily available for any person who wants to know.

First, some explanation is in order concerning the abbreviations in the title of this article? **AP = Apologetics Press; Dave Miller** is the director of Apologetics Press. **Bert Thompson** was formerly the director. **TGJ = The Gospel Journal**. This is a brotherhood paper that has undergone drastic changes within the last few months. Brother **Dub McClish** was the former editor of this paper. **Dave Watson** was the former associate editor. Now, **Barry Grider (preacher for the Forest Hill Irene church of Christ in Memphis, TN and home of Memphis School of Preaching)** is the current editor. (Note: A brief explanation will be given later as to why **Dub McClish** is no longer editor and why **Dave Watson** is no longer the associate editor). **GBN = Gospel Broadcasting Network**. This is a major broadcasting network as overseen by the **Highland church of Christ in Dalton, GA**.

CONCERNING AP & DAVE MILLER

Dave Miller, as noted above, is the new director of **AP**. **Bert Thompson** hired Miller in 2002. When Thompson hired Miller, Miller was known and marked as a false teacher. **Dave Miller** endorsed and bided God speed to the liberal **Calhoun church of Christ in Calhoun, GA** in 1999. Miller was warned in ample time about the compromises of this congregation. He had an excellent opportunity to help turn the tide with this liberal congregation, but he refused not to. Instead, he praised them in their efforts (**This is all documented in detail for those who want to know more.**) Miller is in error on Marriage, Divorce, & Remarriage and also the unscriptural Elder Reevaluation/Reaffirmation doctrine. (**Material is available to anyone who wants to know what exactly these doctrines are.**) When Bert Thompson hired Dave Miller, several brethren wrote Thompson informing him of Miller's errors. However, Thompson would not listen. As a result, AP lost support from several congregations. Bert Thompson is no longer director of AP, and in fact, is not associated with AP in any way (**Documentation is available concerning why this is the case.**) With Dave Miller being the current director, faithful brethren and congregations can in no way support AP. One can't be like one brother suggested and support AP and not support Dave Miller. (**Curtis Cates, director of Memphis School of Preach [MSOP] made this statement which is documented.**) This reasoning is ridiculous and is not biblical, for how can one support one and not the other?

TGJ CONTROVERSY

AP and Dave Miller all play a role in TGJ controversy. To briefly summarize, Dub McClish and Dave Watson was forced to exit from being editor and associate editor. They were forced by the board of directors because they opposed Dave Miller and would not bow down to pressure. Many on the board wanted to support Dave Miller and AP. **(All of this is documented in detail in “Contending For The Faith” paper, edited by David P. Brown. See August, September, & October 2005 issues. Not only are these things documented, but Dave Miller’s errors are documented in these issues as well. I encourage everyone to subscribe to “Contending For The Faith”.)**

GBN CONTROVERSY

This congregation regularly receives updates concerning GBN. In the past, the Highland congregation has solicited our support for GBN. GBN is a multi-million dollar operation that can be seen on satellite TV and on the web 24 hours a day. GBN is in error on a number of particulars, not that anyone who participates in and with the program teaches error, but one can uphold error in deed. The Highland elders have sought the likes of Mack Lyon to be one of the regular speakers on GBN. The Highland elders have openly bided God speed to Dave Miller and are continuing to receive funds from erring congregations. **(All of this is documented in detail, which can be made available for those who want to be informed.)** It is sad that the Highland elders have relegated matters of faith and doctrine to matters of judgment and opinion. They have withdrawn fellowship from the Northside congregation in Calhoun, GA for exposing their errors. The Highland elders accuse the Northside elders of causing strife and division within the body of Christ. The fact of the matter is that those who teach and practice error and endorse such are the guilty culprits, not faithful brethren who seek to warn other brethren and congregations of error and compromise. The Highland elders remain adamant about only using sound brethren as speakers on GBN and only fellowshiping faithful congregations. But, their actions do not say this. Their actions tell a completely different story.

I have not even touched the hem of the garment with this brief summary. Again, I highly encourage the brethren at Sullivan to subscribe to **“Contending For The Faith.”** Brother David P. Brown is the editor and is a man who firmly stands for the truth and will not give in to brotherhood politics. I appreciate him and all others who are standing in the gap during these trying times. All of this would be unnecessary if brethren would simply repent openly and publicly and adhere to the truth in all things without giving God speed to compromisers. It truly saddens me to see men I have known for years and that I considered to be sound and faithful men of God compromise.

SPECIAL NOTE: FOR THOSE WHO WANT THIS MATERIAL, PLEASE SEE ME AND I WILL GET IT FOR YOU. NOT UNTIL AP, MSOP, GBN and all those associated with these works repent, I can’t, according to the clear and plain teachings of the NT, support or endorse them in any way. For those who would like to subscribe to “Contending For The Faith” I will be happy to give the subscription information or if you would like I can do it for you.

Brother Ben Justice is the preacher for the Sullivan church of Christ, Sullivan, MO

ITEM #13

R/R of Elders Manuscript by Dub McClish as printed in the 1997 Bellview lectureship book (editor Michael Hatcher)... used by permission.

REEVALUATION/REAFFIRMATION OF ELDER'S?

BY DUB MCCLISH

INTRODUCTION

The following note was in a printed worship announcement program of a local congregation of the Lord's church earlier this year:

ELDER AFFIRMATION. As part of our service this morning, our five current elders will be re-confirmed [sic] and Brother _____ will be re-appointed [sic] as an elder. This is as a result of the overwhelming response of the congregation to the recently distributed Elder Recommendation Forms. 1

A brother who champions the "reaffirmation" of elders based upon periodic "reevaluation" of them began a manuscript on the subject as follows: "The reaffirmation of elders is new ground for most congregations. It is an uncharted course—a path not traveled. Few congregations have had any experience with reaffirmation."² While (as noted above) this practice is generally of recent vintage among us, it has been observable in the denominational world for many years.³

This writer's first exposure to the practice of appointing elders by a "reaffirmation" process in a church of Christ was in about 1987 when the Richland Hills Church of Christ in Forth Worth, Texas, announced in its bulletin that it follows such a process for both its elders and deacons. Due to its history of leadership in all things liberal for many years, this was not at all surprising. However, the next time I heard of such a practice was both surprising and disappointing. The Brown Trail Congregation, Bedford, Texas, generally known through the years for its Scriptural soundness, used the reevaluation/reaffirmation process in 1990 to restructure its eldership, which included selection of one new elder.⁴ Although there are doubtless many others, in our research for this chapter, we only have documentation of the employment of this practice by the following congregations, including the two mentioned immediately above:

1. The Richland Hills Congregation, North Richland Hills (Forth Worth), Texas
2. The Houston Park Congregation, Selma, Alabama
3. The Pleasant Ridge Congregation, Arlington, Texas
4. The Airport Freeway Congregation, Euless, Texas
5. The 11 th and Willis Streets Congregation, Abilene, Texas⁵
6. The Crestview Congregation, Waco, Texas⁶

7. The Brown Trail Congregation, Bedford, Texas (The only congregation in the list without a reputation for liberalism to a greater or lesser degree.)

DEFINITIONS

In order to understand the practice under discussion we need to understand the definition and application of the principal terms used by its advocates:

1. *Reevaluation* is based upon the word *evaluate*. To evaluate is to determine or fix the worth or value of an object or person (in this case, the latter) based upon examination. To reevaluate is to evaluate again or anew. To reevaluate elders means to reexamine them in order to determine their worthiness or unworthiness to continue to be elders.

2. *Reaffirmation* is based upon the word *affirm*, which means to validate by positive assertion. Thus, to reaffirm means to validate again that which was once validated. In respect to elders, reaffirmation means that men already serving as elders have their continued service validated and positively asserted. Please note that reaffirmation implies prior reevaluation; without it there is no basis for reaffirmation in this procedure.

3. *Reconfirmation* is based upon the word *confirm*. This word means to make firm, strengthen, ratify, or give approval to. Reconfirmation obviously means to repeat the giving of approval or ratification. Since this word is actually a synonym for *reaffirmation*, when applied to elder selection the two words may be and are often used interchangeably.

4. *Deaffirmation* and *deconfirmation* (admittedly coined words, DM) are effective antonyms for *reaffirmation* and *reconfirmation*, respectively. It logically follows that a man who is not reaffirmed/reconfirmed after reevaluation is thereby “deaffirmed”/“deconfirmed”!

APPLICATIONS—SOME CASE STUDIES

In a sermon manuscript on this subject, John Cannon asserted the existence of two general parts to the application of the reaffirmation process:

First, each elder as an individual should reaffirm his desire to continue to serve. Self-examination requires an elder to ask, “Do I still have my heart set on serving the Lord’s church as an elder?” (1 Tim. 3:1). If the answer is “no,” he should be willing to resign or retire with dignity. If the answer is “yes,” then he should be concerned about the congregation’s attitude toward him. Second, the congregation’s attitude should be determined. The congregation can reaffirm its desire to have any or all of the present elders to continue to serve. They can reaffirm their commitment to follow the leadership of the elders as individual men and as a group or body of elders—the eldership. In the event an elder is not reaffirmed by the congregation, he is given the opportunity to retire with dignity. If reaffirmation is positive, the elders resume their leadership role in the congregation with a vote of confidence.⁷

Cannon’s purpose is to argue the case for the concept and process. Therefore, he does not set forth the details of how either the reevaluation or reaffirmation is to be executed, although he later advocates “frequent evaluation of leaders,” “periodic evaluation,” and that elders should undergo “congregational evaluation periodically.”⁸ While we have confirmation that the congregation where Cannon preaches (Pleasant Ridge, Arlington, Texas) uses this approach, we do not have documentation of the specifics of it.

The Richland Hills Congregation combines a specifically-structured tenure plan with its approach to the reevaluation, reaffirmation, and selection process for both elders and deacons, as follows:

1. Each newly-appointed elder is appointed for only a three-year tenure before reevaluation.
2. At the end of the three-year term he can resign if he chooses no longer to serve or he can choose to be a candidate for reaffirmation, subject to reevaluation by the congregation.

3. If his reevaluation “ballots” are sufficiently negative he understands that he will not be reaffirmed. If they are sufficiently positive he is reaffirmed. (We were not able to learn the formula by which one is reaffirmed or deaffirmed.)⁹
4. New elders are selected and appointed, based upon the evaluation process and formula used for the reevaluation of existing elders.
5. Deacons are reaffirmed and new deacons selected by the same process, except the tenure of deacons is one year.

The Crestview Congregation, Waco, Texas, patterned its process after the plan of the 11th and Willis Congregation, Abilene, Texas (as mentioned above) notwithstanding its claim to be following “a model patterned after that revealed in the book of Acts”). A summary of this plan is as follows:¹⁰

1. The congregation selected fifteen members for a “Drafting Committee” to “draft the procedures for selecting elders and present them to the congregation at an open meeting.”
2. The Drafting Committee prepared a list of “introspective” questions for prospective elders, which, when filled out by the eventually-determined candidates, were made available to the entire congregation.”
3. The chairman of the Drafting Committee conducted an “open” meeting of the congregation in order to select a seven-member “Administrative Committee.” This committee could not include any man who presently served as an elder or who might be an elder candidate.
4. The Drafting Committee tabulated the nomination ballots for members of the Administrative Committee, with the top seven vote-getters being appointed, after which the Drafting Committee dissolved.
5. The Administrative Committee, after selecting its chairman, had the responsibility to review and supervise the elder selection procedure.
6. The congregation was urged to submit written, signed nominations for elders over a given number of days, with existing elders automatically nominated unless they removed themselves from consideration (which four of the five Crestview elders did on February 12, 1987—four days after nominations began). Each candidate had to receive at least twenty nominations to be considered for appointment/reappointment.
7. The Committee then met with each candidate to determine his willingness to be appointed if selected. The list of those who were willing was then placed before the congregation.
8. A period of several days was allowed during which any member could lodge Scriptural objections to any of the men. These had to be in writing, signed, and delivered to the Committee by the pre-announced deadline.
9. “Ballots” (their word) were distributed and voting on the candidates took place on a given Sunday morning after worship. “Making the cut” for reaffirmation/affirmation was based on “yes,” “no,” and “I don’t know” “votes” (their term) cast for each man according to the following intricate formula:

The minimum level of confidence is a percentage of all affirmative votes cast for a nominee

after his “I Don’t Know” votes have been subtracted from the total number of votes cast. The minimum level of confidence for elders shall be set at no lower than 70%. The maximum percentage of “I Don’t Know” votes shall be set at no higher than 25% of the total number of votes Cast.¹²

10. The Committee tabulated the elder ballots on the same day the voting was done, thus determining which nominees had been “affirmed.” This being done, the ballots were destroyed.

11. The Committee then announced the results of the voting and set a date for installation/reaffirmation of the new eldership.

12. The Committee prepared a written report, in conjunction with suggestions from the congregation, evaluating the selection procedures and projecting the date for the next selection process. The Committee then dissolved and its functions ceased.

The specifics of the reevaluation/reaffirmation/selection blueprint implemented at Brown Trail, although not as intricately detailed, have many similarities to the above. The document in which they set forth their plan is reproduced in full below:

1. The elders formed a committee to regulate and monitor the process. Committee members: Gary Fallis, Dave Miller, Johnny Ramsey, Don Simpson.¹³

2. Formally apprise the congregation of the commencement of the evaluation/selection process (Dave Miller—April 8). Present sermons on elder qualifications and responsibilities (Johnny Ramsey—April 15 & 22).

3. Distribute evaluation/selection forms to the membership (April 22). Give membership one week to carefully/prayerfully evaluate present eldership as well as potential new elders and submit forms to the committee no later than April 29.¹⁴

4. Tabulation of forms by the committee. Present elders must receive 75% support of those submitting forms.¹⁵ Individual interview appointments will be scheduled. Interviews will facilitate introspection and review biblical qualifications.

5. Names presented to the congregation (May 13). A two-week period will be given for the submission of signed scriptural objections to the committee (Deadline: May 20).

6. If any objections are forthcoming, interview appointments with objectors will be scheduled in order to ascertain the validity of objections. The objector will not be required to meet with the one to whom he objects. The objector’s anonymity will be maintained. Scriptural objections will then be discussed with those receiving objections.

7. Appointment/ordination service (May 27).¹⁶

All of the plans above, while differing in some details have numerous things in common, including the following: 1. A committee (or committees) which stands between existing elders and the congregation. 2. The committee is vested with authority and oversight of the entire reevaluation/selection process. 3. The committee establishes an arbitrary (and sometimes complex) formula by which it determines who is to be reaffirmed/affirmed. 4. The congregation reevaluates existing elders and suggests prospective elders. 5. A period of time is allowed for lodging objections against any of the candidates. 6. Those who satisfy the preestablished

formula and who are not disqualified because of sustainable Scriptural objections lodged against them are then reaffirmed or affirmed, respectively.

Having seen the nature of the process, we turn now to consider the attempts to justify and defend it on the basis of Scriptures.

JUSTIFICATIONS OFFERED BY ADVOCATES

Those congregations that have adopted a reevaluation/reaffirmation approach to elder and/or deacon appointment (such as the ones described) indicate varied attitudes toward justification of same. These range from no justification attempt to the setting forth of an alleged Scriptural basis.

John Cannon observes that the New Testament says little about the appointment of elders. Just as it says nothing of elder tenure, resignation, retirement, leave of absence, or sabbatical, "Likewise, the reaffirmation of elders, either individually or congregationally, is not addressed in the text." He concludes that reaffirmation is in the realm of "congregational judgment."¹⁷

The documents from the 11th and Willis Congregation (Abilene, TX) offer no justification for their plan, however, the "Crestview Plan" (Waco, TX) (which is based entirely upon that of the Abilene Church) attempts to do so. This is likely explained by the fact that the Abilene Congregation had been using their plan so long that they assumed that none of its members would question it. On the other hand, this was all new and novel to Crestview, and its implementers seemed to have anticipated objections to it on Scriptural grounds. For whatever reason, the Crestview Administrative Committee offered the following in the opening paragraph of its "Procedure" explanation: "We are choosing to follow a model patterned after that revealed in the book of Acts in which the Church [sic] sought to determine its leaders." We suppose that the passage referred to above is the same as that mentioned in a later statement made orally to the congregation by Norman Murphy, Chairman of the Administrative Committee:

The purpose of this process is simply for this congregation to recognize the shepherds/elders among us whom God has already chosen. Notice how Matthias was chosen as the apostle to replace Judas. Acts 1:24 says: "And they prayed and said, 'Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen... [RSV, DM]. Not even the apostles sought to impose their will on the church.¹⁸

The Brown Trail (Bedford, TX) Elder Selection Screening Committee went to much greater pains than those previously cited in its attempt to provide Scriptural justification for employing its elder reevaluation process. This would be expected for at least two reasons: (1) The Brown Trail Church has had a long history of seeking to do only what the Scriptures authorize (admirably so), and the other congregations involved in this work have not exactly distinguished themselves in this pursuit. (2) Both the Brown Trail elders and the committee of its preachers and instructors surely anticipated that its adoption of this process would identify them with generally-recognized liberal congregations in the minds of many sound brethren and that they would therefore receive criticism because of this fact.¹⁹ Due to the committee's concerns about such matters it issued the following lengthy (by comparison) "Rationale" for the program they adopted:

1. The members select elders to begin with (Acts 6:3). Since the complexion of congregational

membership changes over the years, an eldership may conceivably no longer consist of the same individuals whom the present membership would select.

2. Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow. Even if a man is technically qualified to be an elder, if the membership where he attends does not perceive him as a leader whom they respect and trust, he cannot shepherd effectively.

3. The Bible makes provision for the evaluation of an elder's spiritual standing (1 Tim. 5:19). Should a current elder be found to be disqualified, he no longer meets the qualifications to be an elder. An evaluation process is simply one expedient means of ascertaining the elder's conformity to God's will. "Once an elder, always an elder" is as false as "once saved, always saved."

4. Elders have the authority to ascertain the amount of confidence that members have in their leadership capabilities. Any shepherd who genuinely wishes to serve the flock will naturally desire the continued approval and respect of that flock. Should an elder no longer sustain that respect from a sizable portion of the flock for whatever reason, the only proper attitude would be to remove oneself from a position that depends upon credibility. A Christian does not have to be an elder to go to heaven.²⁰

Let us summarize the assertions offered in justification of the concept of reevaluation and reaffirmation of elders from all of the foregoing sources:

1. The New Testament authorizes the selection and appointment of elders, but does not instruct us how to do so. Therefore, we must use our judgment concerning the best way to do so.
2. The selection of Matthias as an apostle (Acts 1:24) is a model for selection of elders. God had already made His choice and the other apostles simply employed a means by which He could reveal who it was.
3. Elders are to be selected by the members (Acts 6:3).
4. Elders must have respect of the church members to be able to serve effectively.
5. Elders should be evaluated to see if they continue to be qualified (1 Tim. 5:19).
6. Elders have the authority to determine whether or not the congregation still has sufficient confidence in them to respect and follow their leadership.

RESPONSES TO THE JUSTIFICATIONS

The initial response that needs to be made in reference to the proffered justifications is to observe the following: All of the justifications have linked (whether wittingly or unwittingly) selection and appointment of elders with reevaluation and reappointment of elders as if they were inseparable and without distinction. The basic argument of the reevaluation advocates may thus be stated as follows:

5. The Scriptures authorize local congregations to select and appoint their own elders, but the details of doing so are in the realm of expediency.

6. Reevaluation and reaffirmation are merely alternate names for and means of the selection and appointment of elders.

7. Therefore, the Scriptures authorize reevaluation and reaffirmation of elders as expedients for selection and appointment of elders. The first premise above is true. Assuredly, the Scriptures authorize the selection and appointment of elders/bishops/pastors in every congregation in which two or more men can be found who are Scripturally qualified (Acts 14:23; 15:4ff; 16:4; 20:17; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17- 20; Tit. 1:5-9). Moreover, the specifics of how these are to be done are not provided either by example or precept in the New Testament. Such matters are therefore left to the exercise of human wisdom that works in harmony with the overall context of Scriptural principles.

The problem arises with the second premise above: It assumes that which requires proof and evidence, which are not offered. It should be obvious to all that programs of “reevaluation” and “reaffirmation” (or “deaffirmation”) (such as those described above) of previously-selected and appointed elders are not the same as mere selection and appointment procedures. The plans referenced above use separate and different forms for evaluating present elders and nominating new elders—a tacit admission that reevaluation and initial selection are separate processes even in **their** minds. Moreover (as noted above), the Brown Trail plan stipulates: “Present elders must receive 75% support of those submitting forms.” No such stipulation was applied to those who had not previously served. Since the second premise is false, the third premise (conclusion) is necessarily false. The reevaluation, reaffirmation, deaffirmation process concerning elders is a separate issue from the mere selection and appointment of elders and thus must be separately tested in light of the Scriptures. There is both implicit and explicit authority for the latter. There is neither for the former.

What about the use of Acts 1:24 as justification, per the Crestview documents? This writer must admit that he has never before seen this passage used in any connection with the selection or appointment of elders, and, we think, with good reason! The setting here is the meeting of the 120 disciples, including the eleven apostles, in Jerusalem between the ascension of the Lord and the Day of Pentecost. In the process of selecting a replacement for Judas, the group prayed (apparently led by Peter, v. 15): “Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show of these two the one whom thou hast chosen, to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away” (vv. 24–25).

It is argued that the apostles did not “impose their will on the church.” This would hardly have been possible since the church had not yet been established! But granting that this was after the church was established, it hardly helps the argument unless those making the argument are willing to cast lots and rely upon same as the means by which God signals His choice of elders. The fact that this was a selection involving the miraculous element invalidates it as a precedent for any generation of the church since the cessation of miracles. True, this incident shows that the apostles did not independently or arbitrarily make the choice of Matthias, but this has little to do with the question before us. The “church” did not make the selection, either. God did! The argument seems to be that because the apostles did not choose Matthias, we therefore have Scriptural authority for reevaluating and reaffirming or “deaffirming” elders. This is a very large stretch—even for a Texas church!

We turn our attention now to the “Biblical Rationale” statement (hereafter referred to as the “Rationale”) issued by Brown Trail (see above). Since it is by far the longest attempt at a Biblical justification, it will require a longer response than the other attempts. While realizing

that the Bible need teach a thing only once for it to be the will of God, it is still noteworthy that the four paragraphs of the “Rationale” are not all that “Biblical.” That is, only two passages are cited (not even quoted) and little application of them is made. Had there been more Scripture in their favor they surely would have used it. We intend to demonstrate that neither of these passages justifies what these brethren purport to see in them.

The first passage cited is Acts 6:3. What, if anything, does it have to say about the issue before us? The only point the “Rationale” drew from it was that “The members select elders to begin with (Acts 6:3).” The context of this passage is the response of the apostles to the complaint from the Grecian Jews that “their widows were being neglected in the daily ministrations” (v. 1). The apostles called the church together and told them, “Look ye out therefore, brethren, from among you seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (v. 3). While admitting in his sermon cited earlier that the seven men selected were not elders (in his opinion they were deacons),²¹ Dave Miller concludes: “Let’s simply note that here is an inspired selection process given by the inspired apostles.” We have no problem with this conclusion. In fact, we believe it is a correct use of the passage and have so used it for many years. However, we ask how this justifies the reevaluation, reaffirmation, deaffirmation program? All this passage does is furnish the principle that the whole congregation is to be involved in the selection of elders (and deacons), not in some intricate reevaluation process of men who were already selected, appointed, and serving.

Next, the “Rationale” states: “Since the complexion of congregational membership changes over the years, an eldership may conceivably no longer consist of the same individuals whom the present membership would select,” Our initial reaction to this statement was registered immediately after the Brown Trail program was implemented and it remains the same:

Just because the “complexion” of a congregation changes over the years (as all do) says nothing to justify the practice (i.e., of reevaluation/reaffirmation). When saints come to place membership with a congregation they are under the same directive to submit themselves to the elders of that congregation, just as every other member is (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). If said members cannot follow the leadership and work under the oversight of those elders, why should they want to place membership?...

I see certain harmful consequences that may accrue from this practice: (1) The congregation is “up for grabs” with the change of congregational “complexion.” Any group of errorists of any sort (antis, premillennialists, Crossroaders, Kingites, whatever) could move into a congregation over a period of months and so change the “complexion” of a church as to demand their own chosen elders. Of course, this has been done as a power move in more than one place, but the “reevaluation” program invites and encourages it. (2) This “reevaluation/reconfirmation/deconfirmation” concept removes the oversight of the congregation from the elders (Acts 20:28) and gives it to 25% of the congregation. Majority rule in the absence of elders has its drawbacks at times, but allowing a mere 25% to determine who will or will not serve as elders, and that, perhaps on the basis of personal likes and/or dislikes rather than on Scriptural qualifications, is absurd. Moreover, the 25% apparently relates to the number of forms received by the...screening committee, rather than 25% of the actual membership (75% support of those submitting forms,” “Procedure...” statement [emp. DM]). Depending on how many forms were submitted, the 25% could represent a much smaller percentage of the entire membership. Talk about “minority rule”!²²

Garland Elkins registered a similar response to the “change of complexion” idea:

Those who contend for “reconfirmation” argue that many of the present members were not there when the present elders were appointed, and if they were given the opportunity at present they would not be in favor of appointing the present elders. That may be true, but remember that they agreed to work under the oversight of the present elders when they placed their membership with a given congregation.²³

W. Terry Varner reacted to the “change of complexion” statement as follows:

[The] argument for “Reconfirmation” based on “ the complexion of a congregation in terms of its membership can change over a period of time...no longer consist of the same individuals...” proves nothing. Hopefully, the case would be that...the congregation would grow by winning souls and transfer of memberships, so that membership would indeed change. If the eldership continues to meet the divine qualifications, whether the complexion of the congregation changes or not, he remains God’s servant as an elder.... For a congregation’s complexion to change wherein the members would not submit themselves places the members in violation of Heb. 13:17, “obey them that have rule over you [sic].”²⁴

There is not even any reasonable, much less Scriptural, connection between the “change of complexion” of a congregation and the justification for some sort of reevaluation/reaffirmation process for elders.

The next item in the “Rationale” asserts: “Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow.” It goes on to argue that while a man may be “technically qualified” to be an elder, if the congregation does not respect and trust him as a leader, he cannot “shepherd effectively.” Does not this open the floodgates to abuse of and rebellion against the eldership or at least of certain men who are elders? Does not this place all of the responsibility upon the elders to be men (even though Scripturally qualified) who the members want to follow (based on carnal standards), rather than placing it on the members to obey the elders because they are qualified and because God commands them to (Heb. 13:17, et al.)?

Mac Deaver wrote the following perceptive observations in response to the attempted justification of the “reevaluation” of elders on the basis that the members will not follow him even though he is Scripturally qualified:

Brother Miller did not exactly prove what he set out to prove regarding the alleged scripturalness of evaluating elders who are already elders in order to determine whether or not the sheep are going to follow them.

I think the matter of stressing that elders can’t lead if the sheep won’t follow needs to be thought about more thoroughly. The evaluation process, as far as I can see,...is to determine whether or not the congregation is willing to submit to certain men. It is not simply an effort to find out who is or is not scripturally qualified to remain an elder.

I think the position that brother Miller takes implies that at any time there is an effort on the part of the elders to lead in a direction in which the sheep don’t want to go, then all they have to do at that time is to reevaluate the eldership and remove all those to whom they do not want to

submit. **This would imply that the elders are not ruling the congregation but that really the congregation is ruling the eldership** [emp. DM].... 25

The argument that a man could meet the qualifications, yet not be perceived by the members as a shepherd or one to whom they would submit themselves “is filled with questions and problems,” according to W.Terry Varner:

1. If an elder met the divine qualifications, he would, by virtue of his qualification, “know” the flock he helps to oversee (I The. 5:12-13) and be a watchman of (Acts 20:28-31; Heb. 13:17).
2. The subsequent result would be that the eldership would be known (come to be known by all newcomers in the membership). There is no justification for “Reconfirmation of the Eldership.”²⁶

This pretense of an argument in fact adds a qualification to those in the Scriptures, namely, that “The bishop therefore must measure up to certain ‘leadership qualities’ as determined by at least 75% of the membership.”

The second passage of Scripture cited in the “Rationale” (1 Tim. 5:19) is supposed to demonstrate that “the Bible makes provision for the evaluation of an elder’s spiritual standing.” In this passage Paul teaches: “Against an elder receive not an accusation, except at the mouth of two or three witnesses.” He then adds: “Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear” (v. 20). The “Rationale” goes on to state the redundancy that “should a current elder be found to be disqualified, he no longer meets the qualifications to be an elder.” It is then alleged that “an evaluation process is simply one expedient means of ascertaining the elder’s conformity to God’s will.” The paragraph closes by stating: “‘Once an elder, always an elder’ is as false as once saved, always saved.”

Our immediate response to this use of 1 Timothy 5:19 when we first read the “Rationale” was that it was a misuse of it, and our convictions have not changed. We wrote the following concerning this part of the “Rationale”:

I find no Scriptural precedent for it [i.e., the “reevaluation/reconfirmation” practice] in 1 Timothy 5:19–20. To find this practice in this text requires some imaginative eisegesis, rather than sound exegesis. Of course, “once an elder, always an elder” is faulty. However, the task and necessity of removing an elder because two or three witnesses sustain a charge of sin against him is one thing, and “reevaluating” and either “reconfirming” or “deconfirming” an entire eldership as a matter of policy or routine is something altogether different. Further, I know of no basis for removing a man as an elder unless he is proved to be unqualified on the basis of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. To say that a man should be removed because “25% of the congregation doesn’t want to follow him” or “doesn’t like him” [is not in this passage or any other]. Brown Trail has not announced that it will do this annually or at any other stated interval, but the precedent has now been set for doing it. “If it was a good thing to do once, why not a good thing to do regularly?” it might be argued.²⁷

The late Bill Jackson wrote some incisive comments relating to the “reevaluation” practice and removing a man from the eldership as set forth in this part of the “Rationale”:

The work of the eldership is permanent—the congregation will always need elders. The men appointed were appointed because they met the qualifications set forth in the Bible. I think all of us would agree that an elder can resign, and certainly, if unqualified, should be removed if he does not resign. But that is the point: An elder is “examined, evaluated” day-by-day in his life and in his functioning. Fellow elders and the congregation should be able to see the man, know the man, day-by-day in the work of the kingdom. It becomes nothing but a political arrangement, giving every man a vote, however wrongly motivated he may be, and through this process, good and qualified men can be rejected on this second evaluation, and thus unscriptural and liberal forces can move their own men into Office!²⁸

Once more, from the pen of W. Terry Varner came the following words:

Elders must meet the divine qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1–7, Titus 1:3–9, 1 Peter 5:1–3, and other related Scriptures. This is not to affirm “once and elder, always an elder,” as brother Miller seems to accuse those of us of who would oppose the “Reconfirmation of Elders.”

Since an elder must meet the divine qualifications in order to be appointed an elder, it follows by implication, that an elder becomes disqualified when he fails to meet and/or violates the divine qualifications. To imply any other manner of removing an elder or eldership is to assume more than the Bible teaches. There is no hint of “Reconfirmation of Elders” in the divine qualifications.²⁹

The “reevaluation” process is merely an expedient means of determining whether or not an elder is conforming to God’s will, the “Rationale” asserts. John Cannon made the same basic assertion in his attempt to justify the reevaluation procedure to the Pleasant Ridge Congregation (Arlington, TX): “The reaffirmation of elders, either individually or collectively is not addressed in the text.... If congregational judgment or opinion is valid for current practices of dealing with ‘elder questions,’ then reaffirmation would be in the same realm of congregational judgment.”³⁰ The attempt to place the reevaluation/reaffirmation phenomenon in the realm of expediency overlooks an elementary principle of Biblical hermeneutics:

Authorization must precede

expediency. In other words, no matter can be expedient unless it is first authorized, and the authorization for this practice has not been produced.

The final paragraph of the “Rationale” asserts that elders have the authority to determine what level of confidence the members have in their “leadership capabilities.” Granting that they have this authority, where is there any emphasis in the New Testament relating to a craving for such information? This sort of uneasiness smacks more of the cold, sterile, secular concerns of executives in the business world than it does of God’s elders. It is evident throughout the “Rationale” that there is a severe preoccupation with whether or not an elder is perceived as having “leadership” qualities that will inspire members to follow him. There seems to be a corresponding under emphasis on the actual Scriptural qualifications themselves in the whole reevaluation/reaffirming process. Elders have authority in the local congregation in matters of expediency and judgment, but they do not have authority to empower a committee, whatever its purpose, that supersedes the authority God gave them alone.

A LIST OF CONCERNS

We will now list a number of matters that need to be seriously considered by any congregation that is contemplating adoption of a reevaluation/reaffirmation plan. This plan concerns us because:

1. It professes to “reappoint” (the practical meaning of reaffirming or reconfirming) men who are already appointed and who have not resigned (both contradictory and nonsensical).
2. It renders duly-selected and appointed elders only “de facto” or “quasi” elders during the reevaluation process.
3. It places an administrative or screening committee in authority, to which the existing elders must give account and submit.
4. It prevents elders (who are to oversee all of the members and all of the work of all of the congregation) from having any voice in or oversight of who will serve as elders.
5. It sets a precedent that will be very difficult to abandon. It will thenceforth appear unfair to those to whom it was originally applied if all succeeding elders are not likewise subjected to it.
6. It adds the qualification of “leadership characteristics” to the qualifications found in the New Testament.
7. It may result in removing certain unqualified men from the eldership, but it also provides an opportunity for forces of error to quickly and easily gain control of the eldership of a congregation with a minimum number of people by removal of qualified men. (What if the elders in a congregation are qualified men who are determined to keep the church pure, but in the reevaluation process a twenty-six percent element of liberals in the church turn in negative ballots? Just this easily [and unscripturally] can a dedicated, qualified eldership be restructured.)
8. It creates a great potential for dissension and division in a congregation should the elders dare contradict the committee, the existence of which they have authorized and whose policies and procedures have been sanctioned by the congregation.
9. It gives an opportunity for fraud, deceit, and favoritism in the process of tabulation of the ballots by the committee members.
10. It could encourage an elder who is being reevaluated to engage in politicking and “promise-making” in order to be able to attain the necessary percentage of votes for reaffirmation.
11. It establishes arbitrary percentages for “reaffirmation” or “deaffirmation.”
12. It necessarily tabulates the percentages only of those who actually participate in the balloting, which may represent much smaller percentages of the actual membership.
13. It allows a small percentage of the members of a congregation to determine who will be its elders and how long they will serve.
14. It smacks more of the standards of failure and success employed by business rather than the standards set forth in the New Testament.
15. It replaces the Scriptural mandate, “them that sin rebuke before all” (1 Tim. 5:20) with “in the event an elder is not reaffirmed by the congregation, he should be given opportunity to retire with dignity.”³¹
16. It supplants the Scriptural instruction for dealing with sin and/or failure in qualifications of elders (1 Tim. 5:19) with a humanly-contrived scheme of detailed and intricate “reevaluation” relating more to “leadership characteristics” than to Scriptural qualifications.

CONCLUSION

The one major concern that overrides all others for lovers of Truth is that the formal, arbitrary, highly structured reevaluation, reaffirmation, or deaffirmation procedure that is almost a fad

running through liberal congregations (and that has ensnared even some unwary conservative ones) is without Scriptural authority. Most of those who defend it hardly make an appeal to the Scriptures. Those who attempt such an appeal fail.

Philip Gould, a deacon at the Brown Trail Congregation at the time the “reevaluation” and “reconfirming” plans were being implemented, expressed his grave concern about this and several other matters in a letter to the elders. The words below are germane to the point at hand:

Regarding the office of an elder, brother Peterman [an elder at Brown Trail in 1990, DM] mentioned something called “reconfirming” the existing elders through a majority or some percentage of votes of the congregation. I assume that this is similar to the bishops’ way of electing a new pope, **because there is no basis for it in God’s Bible** [emp. DM]. The eldership is not a popularity contest. You are either qualified or you are not—you know the Truth. It was interesting to see where the Airport Freeway Congregation [Euless, TX], now home to many past Brown Trail members, “reconfirmed” their elders a few weeks ago as they installed others. Is the Brown Trail Church going to import doctrinal error from those who previously left when God’s will and not theirs prevailed?³²

Many other astute Bible students have recognized this dearth of authorization and have boldly stated so:

Robert R Taylor, Jr.:

Like you, I do not believe there is Biblical authorization for what they [the Brown Trail Elder Selection Screening Committee] proposed. I constantly stand amazed at our brethren seeking to tamper with God’s crystal clear pattern. The eldership is clear in Holy Writ. They are seeking to muddy the clear water of such. I view such with great alarm.³³

Bill Jackson:

There is absolutely no Bible, or justification, for that matter, of “reconfirming, reexamination, or reevaluation” as to either elders or deacons. It smacks of political maneuvering done in foreign countries whereby a new government is formed, based on “reevaluation” and a “vote of confidence.” It reflects adversely on a congregation, and those behind this process, to move in this direction.³⁴

W. Terry Varner:

The process of “Reconfirmation of Elders” is without Scriptural basis and results in a way to remove Scriptural men as elders and to place men into the office of the eldership that harmonize more nearly with the thoughts and desires of the membership rather than the divine qualifications.³⁵

Garland Elkins:

I do not know of any Bible authority for “electing” elders as if it were a political process. Neither do I know of any Bible authority for “reconfirming” existing elders. If elders lose their qualifications, they should resign. If qualified elders resign, the congregation has the same right to appoint them again in the future (if they are qualified) as they did the first time they were appointed.... I do not know why brethren cannot be content to simply “appoint” (ASV),

“ordain” (KJV) (Acts 14:23) rather than to come up with an imaginary “reconfirmation” of present elders.³⁶

Mac Deaver:

I find no authority for such a procedure in the New Testament.³⁷

We concluded our own written reaction to this practice at the time it was being carried out with the following assessment:

The best argument against it is the same as that against the instrument and a thousand other innovations that men have dreamed up: “There ain’t no Bible fer it,” as the hillbilly saint declared!³⁸

ENDNOTES

1. The Sunday Morning Review, Houston Park Church of Christ, Selma, Alabama (Jan. 19, 1997). Our thanks to Michael Hatcher for this document.
2. John H. Cannon, Jr., “A New Direction for Church Leadership: The Reaffirmation and Selection of Elders Among Churches of Christ,” MS of sermon delivered at Pleasant Ridge Church of Christ, Arlington, TX (n.d., but 1991 or later), p. 1. Cannon excerpted and edited this MS from his unpublished Doctor of Ministry dissertation by the same title, for the College of Biblical Studies, Abilene Christian University. (The quotation endnoted is one of the very few things in the entire manuscript with which I can agree, incidentally!). Our thanks to Jesse Whitlock for this document.
3. Garland Elkins tells of first seeing such procedures in the Christian Church perhaps thirty years ago (from a personal letter to Goebel Music, May 14, 1990 [used by permission and with appreciation]). As with most of the other innovations, the change agents are continually introducing into the worship, organization, and work of the New Testament church, this one apparently originated in sectarian/denominational circles where the issue of Scriptural authority is rarely considered. We thank Goebel Music for several letters and documents relating to this subject.
4. This writer has known and loved many of the brethren at Brown Trail, including her preachers and some of her elders, for many years. He have also worked closely with this congregation in many ways for a number of years. Therefore, while it particularly grieves him to report this information concerning her, fairness and consistency demand it. He is not opposed to Brown Trail as such, but only to the error in which he believes she was involved in this matter.
5. Three of its six elders (in 1989, the date of documents in our possession) were firmly ensconced at Abilene Christian University (Ian Fair, Dean of the College of Biblical Studies; Neil Lightfoot, Professor of Bible; Dub Orr, board member). Our thanks to Darrell and Ruth Hanson for extensive documents pertaining to the 11th & Willis plan.
6. This concept was adopted in 1986–1987 after instruction sessions at Crestview by Ian Fair and Dub Orr. The Crestview documents and forms are almost “carbon copies” of the ones produced by 11th and Willis. (We infer from a cover letter accompanying the documents from 11th and Willis that brethren Fair and Orr have introduced their procedure in other congregations where they have lectured on the eldership.) Our thanks to Darrell and Ruth Hansen for numerous documents relating to the Crestview procedures.
7. Cannon, p. 2.
8. Cannon, pp. 6–7.
9. Interestingly, the Richland Hills “Affirmation-Reaffirmation” ballots for 1992 contained only a “yes” or “no” box to check for each candidate. The 1996 ballots contained a third box to check: “Don’t know this elder.” Since the “I don’t know” response is a prominent part of the formula coming out of 11th and Willis (Abilene, TX) and adopted

by Crestview (Waco, TX), this addition by Richland Hills may reflect influence from one or both of these congregations.

10. Quoted from "Suggested Procedures for Participative Appointment of Elders" (Crestview Church of Christ, Waco, TX, 1987), p. 1. The plans of these two churches are so similar that there is no need to summarize both of them.

11. "Introspective Questionnaire for Elder Candidates" (Crestview Church of Christ, 1986, Revised 12/17/86). In explaining the rationale for the questions, we find it significant that the Committee stated the following: "These carefully chosen and sometimes delicate questions are intended to let the congregation know the heart and mind of prospective elders. Per the guidance of brethren Fair and Orr, there are no questions about specific doctrinal matters such as the Holy Spirit, divorce and remarriage, etc." How is that for a telling bit of liberal advice from the ACU bigwigs and an equally telling mark of liberalism in the Crestview folk, that they readily swallowed it?

12. "Suggested Procedures," p. 3.

13. In his sermon at Brown Trail (4/8/90), Dave Miller also added the following information concerning the committee membership and function: "Maxie Boren had 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" (from transcription of taped sermon).

14. Originally, members were not required to sign these forms, per Miller's sermon: "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." By the time the forms were distributed on April 22, this part of the procedure had been changed per a document titled, "Announcement from the Elder Selection Screening Committee": "Only one change has been made in the procedures which were presented two weeks ago to the congregation. The committee is asking that you sign the forms. No forms will be considered which do not include a signature.... The only purpose for requiring signatures is to insure that all participants are members of this congregation and to 'provide things honest in the sight of all men.'"

15. In his sermon, Miller referred to the need for one in a leadership position to voluntarily resign if he "no longer sustains the respect from a sizable portion of the flock" and further stated: "Present elders would need to receive a sizable percentage of support from this congregation." He immediately used objections by 25% of the congregation as a percentage that should cause one to voluntarily resign.

16. "Procedure for Implementing Elder Evaluation/Selection Process, Brown Trail Church of Christ." From the following statements at the beginning of brother Miller's sermon, this "procedure" was apparently suggested by him: "Plans were made several weeks ago more concretely and they [the elders] asked me to present them with some information that would assist them in carrying out this objective." The "Procedure" statement seems to have been worded by the "elder selection screening committee" as a whole: "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 [sic]. 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."

17. Cannon, "A New Direction...."

18. Norman Murphy, "Text of Statement to Congregation from the Administrative Committee" (Feb. 1, 1987).

19. Dave Miller was defensive about this very charge in his sermon of April 8, 1990: "But what about this idea of reevaluating current elders or reconfirming? There are some brethren that are really up in arms it seems to me and say, 'That is what the liberals are doing.' ...We may use the term 'evaluation' of elders, we may use the term 'reconfirmation.' If those terms concern you, then call it something else."

20. "Biblical Rationale for Evaluation of Elders" (n.d.). Ironically, according to a former Brown Trail elder, a "reevaluation/reaffirmation" proposal was suggested by one of the other elders in about 1985, but it was rejected on grounds that there was no Scriptural authority for such a procedure!

21. We differ with the assertion that the seven men of Acts 6 were deacons: (1) These men (by Miller's admission) were appointed before the church had any elders, It is not reasonable (not to say not Scriptural) to envision a congregation (then or now) with deacons before it has elders or without elders. (2) If these seven men

were deacons in the sense of Philippians 1:1 we have two sets of qualifications for their selection, one in Acts 6:3 and another in 1 Timothy 3:8–10, 12–13. Why so and which should we now use? (3) The use of a form of the Greek word *diakonos* in reference to the “Jerusalem seven” no more implies an “official” position than when used in reference to civil rulers (Rom. 13:4, 6) or to Phoebe (Rom. 16:1). However, as Miller notes, whether or not they were deacons does not negate the fact of the selection process set forth in Acts 6:3.

22. Dub McClish, personal letter addressed to Goebel Music (May 23, 1990). We would add to this that if one is a member of a congregation in which elders begin to deviate from the Truth (whether into some form of liberalism or anti-ism), if those elders cannot be persuaded either to return to the Truth or to resign, then one should leave that congregation and seek one that is committed to the Truth.

23. Garland Elkins, personal letter addressed to Goebel Music (May 14, 1990), used by permission.

24. W. Terry Varner, personal letter addressed to Goebel Music (n.d., but received May 29, 1990), used by permission.

25. Mac Deaver, personal letter addressed to Goebel Music (May 10, 1990), used by permission.

26. Vamer, letter.

27. McClish, letter.

28. Bill Jackson, personal letter addressed to Goebel Music (May 4, 1990), used by permission.

29. Vamer, letter.

30. Cannon, p. 3.

31. Cannon, p. 2.

32. Philip C. Gould, 8-page letter to the Brown Trail elders (March 24, 1990), p. 5. Note: Brother Gould and his family are no longer members at Brown Trail.

33. Robert R. Taylor, Jr., personal letter addressed to Goebel Music (June 20, 1990). p. 2, used by permission.

34. Jackson, letter.

35. Vamer, letter.

36. Elkins, letter.

37. Deaver, letter.

38. McClish, letter.