Fellowship Between Bellview and Milestone

THE BELLVIEW CHURCH OF CHRIST ELDERS, PENSACOLA, FLORIDA

INTRODUCTION

In the March 2007 issue of Banner of Truth, Alan Adams, the associate editor, wrote an article titled “Fighting for Their Rats,” along with a section titled “Reluctant Addendum” (14-16). In the article brother Adams identified himself as a teacher in the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies and an elder and member of the Milestone Church of Christ. This article, and in particular his “Reluctant Addendum,” was very critical of the Bellview Church of Christ and its elders. Thus, we feel obligated to respond to his erroneous remarks.

At the close of this response, pages 7-23, will be supplemental documents including a copy of brother Adam’s article, “A Review of Fellowship Actions Between the Bellview and Ensley Congregations,” and pertinent letters.

THE WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

Much of brother Adam’s article “Fighting for Their Rats” is unworthy of comment because it relates to his uncomplimentary remarks about the Confederate soldiers, their unsophisticated language, and their poor economic state. However, brother Adams states:

Speaking only of those I know about, there have been so many battles waged between brethren during my thirty plus years of preaching. Such conflicts are apparently inevitable (cf Matt 18:7), and I concur that sometimes it is the right thing to ‘fight’ and ‘war’ (cf. 1Tim 6:12; 2Co 10:4). Let us be sure, though, that we are not marching into battle on someone else’s pretext, or for that matter, pretense.

In his “Reluctant Addendum” brother Adams speaks as if he were on the front line when he speaks of “the late Max Miller and friends’ rebellion in 1988.” In reality, he was on the opposite side of the world in Taiwan when he began “marching into battle on someone else’s pretext, or for that matter, pretense.”

ERRONEOUS EXAMPLES OF FELLOWSHIP

Brother Adams cites some examples which he appears to believe show that fellowship has been restored. However, scriptural restoration of fellowship requires repentance on the part of the Ensley (Milestone) elders who initially broke it.

Brother Adams appeals to the fact that “several Bellview members have several times attended our lectures and meetings” and “several Milestone members have likewise attended Bellview functions.” We cannot say about the Bellview members attending their “lectures and meetings” as we have not attended. They have attended some of our functions. Brother Adams needs to realize that attendance at meetings such as he describes does not restore fellowship nor indicate fellowship.

Brethren, if an atheist or a member of a denominational group attends one of your Gospel meetings or one of your regular services, does that place you in fellowship with that atheist or denominational group? When the apostles went into the synagogues during the early church, did their presence mean...
Editorial...

HERE WE GO AGAIN

In the March 2007 Banner of Truth brother Alan Adams responded to some of our remarks in our February 2007 editorial. (Please see front page article by the Bellview elders for more about Adams). Also, in a letter dated April 26, 2007, a fellow elder with Adams, as well as Milestone’s preacher, Kenneth Burleson, decided to critique a portion of our February 2007 editorial. These brethren developed their critiques along the same lines. To respond to one of them is to respond to the other.

For those who receive Defender you will get a double dip of information concerning the criticisms of brethren Adams and Burleson. None other than the faithful Bellview elders, Paul Brantley and Fred Stancliff, are the respondents.

Before going further, I want to encourage those who are not receiving Defender to sign up for it. It is capably edited by Bellview’s longtime faithful preacher, Michael Hatcher. Defender is a paper that teaches the Truth and exposes error in no uncertain terms. We highly recommend it to our readers. You may contact the editor to let him know you want to sign up for the paper by emailing him at: mhatcher@gmail.com, or contacting the Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Phone #: (850) 455-7595. Being a work of the Bellview congregation the paper is offered free of charge to its subscribers.

Beginning on page 7 CFTF has also printed Adams’ complete critique of some of our editorial remarks. We urge our readers to read Adams’ article first, then the Bellview elders’ material before reading the remainder of our editorial.

Since Adams and Burleson think we were in error regarding Bellview and Milestone’s relationship or the lack thereof, we are pleased to have men who know firsthand the history of Bellview and Milestone’s problems with each other to set a table full of meat for Adams and Burleson to chew. Whether they can swallow what Adams ordered in his March article is entirely another matter.

In his March critique under “Reluctant Addendum,” Adams declares “for a fact” “I know” that fellowship exists between Milestone and Bellview. Having read the material from the Bellview elders, who were “certainly closer to the events and facts” than Adams was, ask yourself what the facts reveal regarding Adams’ claim that fellowship exists between the two churches.

We have never claimed empirical knowledge of the Bellview/Milestone problems and certainly we were not “prescient” to them. (Prescience means “to know beforehand,...foreknowledge of events: a: divine omniscience b: human anticipation of the course of events: FORESIGHT”—Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1988, p. 930.) But Adams was not “prescient” to said problems and he does not have empirical knowledge of the debacle either. Frankly, we are at a loss to understand what knowing about said problems beforehand has to do with obtaining correct knowledge of them in the first place. I was not “prescient” or present at the crucifixion of Christ, but I know it happened. But according to Adams, credible witnesses and adequate evidence are not
sufficient to come to certainty about some person, thing and/or event of history.

I was living in Austin, Texas at the time said problems happened. But, Adams was in Taiwan—half a world away from Pensacola, Florida. Seeing that Adams is not “prescient” nor was he empirically involved, how did he come to know “the facts” in said matter? Strange he forgot to mention his own state of affairs when he was so careful to point out that we were not “prescient,” which we have never claimed to be.

Please note that Adams does not hesitate to state that the late editor of CFTF, Ira Y. Rice, Jr., was withdrawn from by a church in California. Since he is not “prescient” nor does he have empirical knowledge of the matter, how does he know “for a fact” that such happened? Could it be that Adams “knows what he has been told and he has decided to believe that”? He surely knows that it is not as easy as asserting that ‘So ‘n So has withdrawn from Thus ‘n So.’” In the pages to follow please note what the Bellview elders, who were “certainly closer to the events and facts” than was Adams, reveal about this matter, which information contradicts Adams’ statement about Rice being disfellowshipped, as well as a number of other matters.

Brother Adams would have us believe he is greatly concerned about and abhors needless trouble in the church, along with those who cause it. He presents himself as one who, in times past, associated himself with certain brethren. But, “in a moment of clarity” he saw them for what they were/are—self-seeking, self-promoting, unprincipled and dishonest hypocrites. From that point to the present he has kept himself pure and above the fray. However, in the middle of his conversion account, as he attempts to expose what he perceived as error in my editorial, he proves that he is not as converted to the ironic spirit as he would have us believe. Out of the clear blue, Adams injects a subject into his critique that is nowhere to be found in my editorial—the Woman Translator (WT) issue. Around ten or so years have past since the topic was publicly discussed. Until about 3 months ago, little to nothing had been said publicly about that issue. Thus, why did our peace loving brother who abhors needless division inject it into his critique? Surely, he was not attempting to stir up needless controversy by doing so, was he?

Could it be when Adams inserted the WT topic into his article there was a bit of desire to give just a small, but “raucous bellow.” I wonder if his eyes may have bulged a tiny bit. Did his face turn at least a light shade of pink? And, if some one had been standing close by, would that person have possibly noticed the smallest quiver of his “jowls”? Just at that moment did he say to himself, “I am fighting for my rats,”... err, ahhh, I mean my rights, not my rats, but my mice—no, no, nooo—MY RIGHTS!— “spiritually speaking,” that is.

We cannot help but wonder why it is that the Milestone church is so upset over a subject that has rarely been mentioned for over ten years, but they fellowship a man who has no problem with Dave Miller’s false doctrines and those who fellowship and defend him. Does Milestone have a problem with Miller’s re-evaluation and reaffirmation of elders, his so-called “intent doctrine” on MDR and the AP men speaking on apologetics in, of all places, liberal churches—without exposing their errors? Yes, why did Adams bring up the WT issue?

He actually wrote that we “spearheaded” the “defense” of the WTI. Maybe Adams would like to tell us if any “spearheading” was being done by anyone holding the opposite view of the WTI—“spearheading” that was going on for some time before we dared to comment contrary to Adams and his own “coterie” of brethren. In those days we wrote on that topic because brethren such as Adams were saying everything they could against the WT, while reasoning and information pertinent to a thorough study of the WT was being left unsaid. Obviously, when it comes to the WT, Adams would rather brethren only listen to what he has to say. What was that he wrote about fighting “for the cause of Truth” on the sole basis of “your own study and conviction and not because someone told you to join up?” Did he not also write, “You be sure that you really are, spiritually speaking, ‘fighting for rights,’ and not for ‘rats’”? Yes, “we should all be mighty careful about joining ourselves to, or attaching ourselves to others’ causes.”

In view of the recent compromising of Bobby Liddell and his MSOP “coterie” regarding Miller et al., it does not surprise us to learn that Bobby was sitting and communing at the table with those who at the very best did not wish Bellview well. Clearly, the whole MSOP “coterie” was visiting and eating with a number of us while in other situations and circumstances they were snuggling up to Miller and his own “coterie” of friends. I suggest that all of our readers read what the Bellview elders had to say about what constitutes fellowship and what does not. Also, does Adams not realize that sister Vada Rice and Bobby Liddell are members of the same church. Thus, they are in fellowship with one another? I wonder how Bobby and sister Rice feel about Adams comments about the late brother Rice? If Adams is in fellowship with Bobby and Bobby is in fellowship with sister Rice (and they are in fellowship), where does that put Adams regarding fellowship with sister Rice?

In view of brother Adams injecting the WT into his critique, and since he has referred to me as a false teacher, are we to conclude that he wants to debate the WT topic publicly? We have never sought such a debate and we do not believe the brethren should divide over the WT. But since Adams in his most peaceful mood wrote what he has, will he not tell us plainly if he is challenging us to a public oral debate?

Since it is the case that we are to have Bible authority for all we believe and practice (Col. 3:17); and, since it is the case that the Milestone elders must think they have Bible authority for using men who are in fellowship with brethren who themselves are in fellowship with false teachers; then, it must be the case that Adams and Burleson believe they have Bible authority to fellowship Tony Liddell, or they would not have had him as a speaker on their annual lectures. Since it is the case that Adams and Burleson have made it clear that they consider Bobby Liddell to be in fellowship with Milestone; and, since it is the case that Liddell is in fellowship with Dave Miller; then, it is the case that Milestone believes they have Bible authority to fellowship brethren who are in fellowship with a false teacher.

Why not have a four night oral debate on whether there is or there is not Bible authority for brethren to fellowship persons who themselves are in fellowship with false teachers? Also, will Adams to tell us plainly if he is challenging us to debate the WT topic?

—David P. Brown, Editor
they were in fellowship (in a spiritual aspect) with Judaism? Certainly not! What if wayward members of the church from whom fellowship had been withdrawn began attending services once again. They would not be in fellowship with the congregation until repentance on their part takes place.

We encourage members of the community who are not Christians to attend our functions, but that does not mean that we are in fellowship with them if they accept our invitation. Simply because brethren Adams, Burleson, and others from Milestone have attended a few of Bellview’s meetings or lectureships, or some of Bellview members attend their functions does not mean that Bellview is in fellowship with Milestone.

Brother Adams then twists a situation that took place during a funeral several years ago. He states: “Milestone’s preacher, Kenneth Burleson, was asked by a now deceased Bellview elder to speak at his wife’s funeral. At that service, Milestone members were asked to stay and ‘eat’ with Bellview members.” The funeral under consideration was that of Hairston Brantley’s wife, Inez Brantley. First, at the time of the funeral, brother Hairston Brantley was no longer an elder of the Bellview congregation as is implied by brother Adams. He had resigned August 30, 1995, and his wife passed away on October 5, 1998. Although he had been a longtime elder of this congregation, when his wife died and Ken Burleson “was asked...to speak,” he was not an elder. Second, brother and sister Hairston Brantley had three sons: Elward, Paul, and Ervin. Paul Brantley is one of the elders at the Bellview congregation and was at the time of Inez Brantley’s death and Elward Brantley was/is one of the deacons. However, Ervin Brantley, at the time of his mother’s death, was one of the elders of the Ensley (now Milestone) congregation. Paul and Elward Brantley did not know that Ken Burleson was to have any part of the funeral till the day it took place. Brother Paul Brantley stated that if he had known beforehand that brother Burleson was to speak, he would have tried to prevent him from having any part in the funeral. Since no one from Bellview knew of his participation till the funeral, the family asked brother Michael Hatcher to inform brother Burleson to only read the obituary and nothing else. Brother Hatcher informed brother Burleson what the family requested—to only read the obituary—a request brother Burleson ignored.

Third, brother Adams tries to imply fellowship between the two congregations because some Milestone members were asked to stay and eat. He writes, “At that service, Milestone members were asked to stay and ‘eat’ with Bellview members.” Brother Adams statement is misleading at this point. The Bellview congregation prepared a meal for those attending the funeral. A general statement was made which invited all of those who attended the funeral to stay and eat. This invitation was not restricted to just Bellview and Milestone members, but also included nonmembers. Additionally, because Ervin Brantley, a member and elder at Ensley/Milestone, was a member of the family, he along with some of his friends from Ensley/Milestone came to eat at the family meal to which everyone had been invited. This meal cannot be considered a determination of fellowship, and if anyone did, they should not have stayed to eat.

After this meal, brother Ken Burleson and brother Michael Hatcher stood out on the parking lot of the Bellview building for over an hour and a half and discussed the problems between the two congregations. Brother Hatcher reiterated at that time the same thing which the Bellview elders had been telling the Ensley elders for several years as to what was necessary to restore fellowship between the two congregations. Brother Hatcher also asked brother Burleson what Ensley considered necessary on Bellview’s part to have fellowship restored. Brother Burleson replied that he did not know, but would find out and send brother Hatcher the information. The only information brother Hatcher received from brother Burleson concerned Ira Rice and events in California. Why have such discussion if, as brother Adams implies, the two congregations have always been in fellowship with each other?

**Withdrawal of Fellowship**

Next brother Adams’ states:

On top of all that, in recent times we received a communication from the Bellview church which among other things, explicitly says Bellview has never withdrawn fellowship from Ensley [Milestone]. Being an elder at Milestone, I know for a fact that Milestone has never withdrawn from Bellview.

The “communication” which brother Adams probably refers to is titled “A Review of Fellowship Actions Between The Bellview and Ensley Congregations.” This “communication” was included in a letter sent to the Milestone elders on January 18, 2006, at the request of brother Tony Edwards “to make one more attempt to restore fellowship with you, the Milestone elders.” If there was fellowship between the two congregations, then why would there be any need to make another “attempt to restore fellowship”? Please carefully consider the review of fellowship which will be reproduced immediately after brother Adams’ article. The purpose of the review was to keep a chronological record of the “actions which have been taken by the Bellview and Ensley elderships to restore the fellowship which has been broken between the congregations since 1987.” Why did brother Adams not mention that part of the “communication”? The first entry is from April 1987, which is where brother Adams takes his statement. A split had taken place in the Bellview congregation with some members leaving Bellview and going to Ensley. The Bellview elders “received four letters, signed by several of those members who had left, in which it was stated by these individuals that they were no longer in fellowship with the Bellview elders.” If you withdraw fellowship from the elders of a congregation, you also withdraw from the congregation of which they oversee. These former members of Bellview “were accepted as members of the Ensley congregation by the Ensley elders, this resulted in breaking the fellowship which previously existed between the two congregations.” When questions were asked by the Bellview members about fellowship with the Ensley congregation, the Bellview elders made a public announcement to the congregation that “Bellview did not withdraw fellowship from the Ensley congregation, but Ensley did withdraw from
Bellview, as is evidenced by four letters from members at Ensley stating that they were withdrawing from the Bellview elders.” This is brother Adam’s proof that Bellview has never withdrawn fellowship from Ensley/Milestone. However, that statement was made in April 1987. There is more to the story than simply what was stated to the congregation at that time, and brother Adams knows it.

Brother Adams raises the question as to whether or not fellowship has been withdrawn. He states that as one of the Milestone elders he knows for a fact that Ensley/Milestone has never withdrawn from Bellview along with his statement about Bellview having never withdrawn from them. There is the recurring problem for brother Adams which comes from Ensley’s own letters. In numerous letters sent from Ensley to Bellview, the elders at Ensley recognize that Ensley and Bellview are not in fellowship. The same is true in the letters Bellview elders sent to the Ensley elders. As early as August 4, 1991, the Ensley elders knew there was no fellowship between the two congregations when they wrote that they were “willing to meet with your Elders to attempt to work out the things that have caused the two congregations to have no fellowship with each other.” Staying with just what the Ensley elders have written to the Bellview elders through the years, we skip to their letter of October 19, 1994, in which they write:

We have been informed that it is Ensley which does not want the broken fellowship which exists between the two congregations restored. Although there may not have been any formal breaking of fellowship, in actuality, there is no fellowship... Brethren, we, the Ensley Elders, sincerely would like to have all matters which now divide us cleared up and forgotten so we could again have the fellowship between us which God demands.

Then in their letter of March 8, 1995, they write, “fellowship does not now exist between the two congregations.” To try to imply as brother Adams has in his “Reluctant Addendum” that the two congregations are in fellowship with each other and always have been appears to be insincere at best.

Now consider what Bellview has written to Ensley. These statements also show that even as Ensley realized there was no fellowship between the two congregations, so did Bellview. In the letter dated August 6, 1991, in response to a request to meet, the Bellview elders write,

In an attempt to work out the things which you mentioned ‘have caused the two congregations to have no fellowship with each other.’ we [sic] request you send us a list of those things which you believe need to be discussed.

There is the recognition and acceptance of the fact that the two congregations have no fellowship with each other. Then on August 14, 1991, Bellview responded to the letter from Ensley stating, “we restate our desire to see an end of those things which you mentioned ‘have caused the two congregations to have no fellowship with each other.’” Again there is confirmation that Bellview recognized there was no fellowship between the two congregations. Also, in this letter the Bellview elders state: “We are happy to meet and, as you said, ‘discuss a basis by which all these differences may be resolved.’”

August 23, 1991 Meeting

Once again, brother Adams has spoken as one who was on the front line of “the late Max Miller and friends’ rebellion in 1988” when the Ensley (Milestone) and Bellview elders met on August 23, 1991. However, he was only recently appointed as an elder of the Milestone congregation. He was not present at the August 23, 1991, meeting between the Bellview and Ensley/Milestone elders.

This meeting was for the expressed purpose of seeing what it would take to restore fellowship between the two congregations. If the two congregations are and have been in fellowship all this time (as brother Adams implies), there would have been no reason for the two elderships to meet to discuss the restoration of fellowship. There are two important aspects of the fellowship situation which took place at that meeting.

In that meeting there was a discussion of certain letters written in 1987 and signed by some of the members who had left the Bellview congregation and placed membership at Ensley withdrawing fellowship from the Bellview elders. During this meeting, brother Paul Brantley asked the Ensley elders if they agreed with and supported the letters withdrawing fellowship from the Bellview elders. Each one of the Ensley elders affirmed that they were in support of those letters. By such affirmation, the Ensley elders did withdraw fellowship from the Bellview elders/congregation. Brother Paul Brantley stated that if the Ensley elders supported those letters, then the Bellview elders and congregation can have no fellowship with Ensley.

Now notice the Bellview letter to Ensley dated October 26, 1994, in which it was stated: “The Bellview elders have never withdrawn fellowship from the Ensley congregation. Ensley has withdrawn fellowship from Bellview as is evidenced by Bellview’s receipt of four letters from members of the Ensley congregation in 1987 in which they stated their determination to withdraw from the Bellview elders. One of those letters was even received from and signed by one of your present elders. At a meeting with you elders in the fall of 1991, all five of you confirmed your agreement to that withdrawal letter. Therefore, the Ensley elders have withdrawn fellowship from the Bellview elders.” In their response to this statement, Ensley wrote in their letter to Bellview dated March 8, 1995: “You also say you have never disfellowshipped [sic] Ensley. If you mean you have never sent a formal letter of withdrawal of fellowship then you are correct, but fellowship does not now exist between the two congregations.” Thus, there is the recognition that there has not been a “formal letter of withdrawal” sent from Bellview to Ensley withdrawing fellowship, there is a recognition that Bellview did not and does not have fellowship with Ensley. One of the two reasons there is no fellowship is that the Ensley/Milestone elders’ agreed to and supported those letters of withdrawal from the Bellview elders/congregation.

The other important aspect of that meeting concerned those from whom Bellview had withdrawn fellowship. In 1988, the Bellview elders scripturally marked and withdrew
fellowship from Max Miller (who has since gone on to his reward), Mike Kiser, and Ernest Underwood. Between the withdrawal from these men and the meeting in 1991, Ensley gave support and continued to fellowship in particular brethren Miller and Kiser. (This fellowship continued after that 1991 meeting as well.) When one fellowships individuals who have been withdrawn from, they cannot stay in fellowship with those who withdrew from the individuals to begin with. Thus, Bellview and Ensley cannot be in fellowship because Ensley fellowshipped those from whom Bellview withdrew. Therefore, in the 1991 meeting with Ensley, the Bellview elders told the Ensley elders that if they continued to fellowship those men from whom we withdrew, we (the Bellview congregation) cannot fellowship them (Ensley elders and congregation). The Ensley elders stated their intention to continue to fellowship and use these men. Again, the Bellview elders let it be known to the Ensley elders that as long as they continued to do so, Bellview could not have fellowship with them. Again, while there has not been a “formal letter of withdrawal” sent from Bellview to Ensley withdrawing fellowship, they were told in the meeting which took place between the two elderships in 1991 that Bellview could not fellowship Ensley.

**LETTERS FOLLOWING THE MEETING**

Following the meeting in 1991, there were no letters written between the two congregations for a few years. Upon receiving a letter from Ensley dated October 19, 1994, the Bellview elders responded on October 26, 1994. The Bellview elders wrote, “If you elders truly want to improve fellowship between Bellview and Ensley congregations, we suggest the following: 1. As an eldership, repudiate and see that the above mentioned letters of withdrawal are retracted. 2. Stop using the three preachers, brothers Miller, Kiser, and Underwood, in your meetings and lectureships.... We encourage the Ensley congregation to recognize this action [Bellview’s scriptural withdrawal from these men] so the souls of these three men may possibly be saved.” These are the same two points made during the meeting with the Ensley elders in 1991. These two points have remained consistent through the years. We then added, “Since brother Miller has died since the date of the above letter, we believe that it would now be appropriate for the Milestone eldership to acknowledge its error in extending fellowship to these three men in the past, and to express its determination not to extend fellowship to brother Kiser or brother Underwood in the future unless they repent of their actions toward the Bellview congregation.” Thus, fellowship has not been restored.

**BROTHER IRA Y. RICE, JR.**

Brother Adams turns his pen to attack Ira Y. Rice who has passed on to his reward and is no longer able to defend himself. He states that brother Rice “was by a church in California charged with specific sins and withdrawn from, and [no] repentance [was] forthcoming...” Please read on page 23 the actual letter and charges to which brother Adams refers. As you can see the Downtown San Francisco Church of Christ withdrew fellowship from Kaan Y. Chin (who later repented). The withdrawal letter only mentions brother Rice (along with a few others) as aiding the formation of a new congregation. The letter actually states: “We will have no further fellowship with brother Chin,” but does not say that about brother Rice. Additionally, brother Rice flatly denied the charges that he had been withdrawn from. In 1989, the elders of the Pearl Street congregation in Denton, Texas, offered to pay the travel expenses of those who were making these charges against brother Rice to come to Texas and discuss the situation. Those in California refused the offer. Since others were making these erroneous charges (like brother Adams has made), brother Rice made a trip to California at his own expense to try and meet with them and work out all the problems. Upon his return, brother Rice stated that the ones making the charges refused to meet with him.

**BROTHER BOBBY LIDDELL**

Brother Adams turns his attention to our former preacher when he writes, “Brother Bobby Liddell preached at Bellview for a number of years, and according to Milestone’s preacher of many years, Kenneth Burleson, he and brother Bobby had a cordial relationship including mutual participation in preachers’ gatherings initiated by brother Burleson; this again belying brother Brown’s ‘no fellowship’ assertion.”

Brother Liddell served well as the Bellview preacher for over six years. During that time we know that he sometimes met with brother Burleson in an effort to restore fellowship between the congregations. Notice also that brother Adams’ statement says that these gatherings were initiated by Burleson. All this shows is that brother Liddell was maintaining a
"cordial relationship." It does not show that fellowship had been restored. Brother Liddell was maintaining this "cordial relationship" in an effort to encourage the restoration of fellowship. This is exactly what 2 Thessalonians 3:15 teaches us to do: "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." However, until repentance on the part of the Milestone elders takes place, fellowship cannot and will not be restored.

LECTURESHIP SPEAKERS AT MILESTONE

Brother Adams then states: "Brother Brown charges that the son [Bobby Liddell’s son, Tony] was speaking with people ‘...that sought the undoing of Bellview all of the time Bobby was their preacher.’ As said, I am an elder at Milestone; and, if brother Brown can point out anybody here, or on our lectureship, who has sought the demise of a sister church, I will do my duty."

The Ensley/Milestone elders supported those letters which unscripturally withdrew fellowship from a sister congregation. Those who spoke on the lectureships at Ensley/Milestone, knowing that they had unscripturally withdrawn fellowship from their sister congregation, are a partaker with them in that unscriptural withdrawal (2 John 9-11). Thus, as brother Brown stated they did seek the undoing of the Bellview congregation.

Does brother Adams not believe that he is contributing to the possible demise of any congregation when he writes his article about them such as his article “Fighting for Their Rats” with his “Reluctant Addendum”? If brother Adams truly means what he wrote: “I will do my duty,” then we suggest:

1. He should start by repenting of having written what he did in his article “Fighting for Their Rats” and with his “Reluctant Addendum.”

2. He should encourage his fellow elders to take the following actions which have been consistent through the years and again noted in our letter to the Milestone elders dated January 18, 2006:

   a. The Milestone elders have not yet repudiated the four letters which were signed by nine members of the Ensley congregation in April 1987 in which they stated their determination to withdraw from the Bellview elders. The Ensley elders (now Milestone) verbally confirmed their agreement with those withdrawal letters in their meeting with the Bellview elders in the fall of 1991.

   b. The Milestone elders have neither acknowledged their error in extending fellowship to brothers Miller, Kizer, and Underwood in the past, nor have they expressed determination not to extend fellowship to brother Kizer and brother Underwood in the future unless these two men repent of their actions toward the Bellview congregation.

CONCLUSION

It is our fervent prayer that the Milestone elders will take care of these two matters so fellowship can be restored. As of the date this is written, neither one of the two things necessary for fellowship to be restored has occurred. Till such time as they are scripturally taken care of, there remains no fellowship between Bellview and Milestone.

SIGNED BY THE ELDERS

Paul Brantley     Fred Stancliff

FIGHTING FOR THEIR RATS

Alan Adams

The Killer Angels is a historical novel about the horrible carnage at Gettysburg, that decisive battle of the Civil War. Our title is actually a sadly humorous quotation from that book.

At one point during the battle, a subordinate tells Union Colonel, Lawrence Chamberlain about an exchange he had had with a Confederate prisoner:

... you want to hear a funny thing? We were talking to these three Reb prisoners, trying to be sociable, you know? But mainly trying to figure ‘em out. They were farmer type fellers. We asked them why they were fighting this war, thinkin’ on slavery and all, and one fella said they was fightin’ for their ‘rats’... They kept on insistin’ they wasn’t fightin’ for no slaves, they was fighting for their ‘rats.’ (Shaara, 170-171).

Further conversation, the subordinate said, had clarified that the Rebs were fighting for their “rights”—which to the unsophisticated non-southern ear may sound like “rats”—but, that they could not identify the specific rights which they believed were being violated.

When the battle was over and the field was strewn with corpses, yet another subordinate said to the same colonel: “How can they fight so hard. them Johnnies, and all for slavery?” (Shaara, 343). Then the first subordinate said,

When you ask them prisoners, they never talk about slavery. But, Lawrence how do you explain that? What else is the war about? If it weren’t for the slaves, there’d never have been no war, now would there? (Ibid.).

Even granting that other factors contributed to this awful war, it would be hard to contest this man’s conclusion. What a horrible irony that most of the Southern blood that was shed in that war was by people who could not have afforded to buy and take care of slaves had they wanted to. No, that horrible commodity was purely the prerogative of the powerful few. Reckon, then, who convinced average Southern men to die by the tens of thousands, and to do so thinking they were in fact “fighting for their rats”? As a Southerner, I think about that and wonder what I would have done? There is little value in subjunctively declaring: I would have done thus and so.

It so often is the same old thing: Big man’s war, little man’s fight.

Jesus implied that the “sons of light” can learn some things via the “sons of this world” (Luke 16:8). Let us do so.

Speaking only of those I know about, there have been so many battles waged between brethren during my thirty plus years of preaching. Such conflicts are apparently inevitable (cf. Matt 18:7), and I concur that sometimes it is the right thing to “fight” and “war” (cf. 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Cor 10:4). Let us be sure, though,
that we are not marching into battle on someone else’s pretext, or for that matter, pretense.

The latest battle royal has been dubbed by one of the power brokers as “the current raging fire.” Not only has this pronouncement been made, but the pronouncers have decided that truly faithful people must fight with them. Before, however, you cut cord wood for some burning issue stop, think: How long has it been burning? When did the fire start? What started it? Who are the folks putting wood on the fire? Why? Good preaching friend: Do not so readily be a joiner, lest you find yourself being cannon fodder for someone else. Be mightily careful with whom you “strike hands” (cf. Prov 22:26). Things are not always as simple as “fighting for our rights,” or even, “truth.”

When observing warring sides and their battles, there is nothing wrong with looking at who the principals are. Can it be, in this present slugfest, other than odd to see folks who were former confederates in sticking it to others, now sticking it to each other? As a having-been-by-both-sides-stuck one, this whole thing gives me a surreal sense of watching the Gingham Dog and Calico Cat eat each other up. It is not at all unlike the Pharisees and Sadducees, who, where Jesus and his disciples were concerned, could go from common cause to enmity and back again. Some comic relief in all this has been to recently hear one side say of their former confederate: “He really pulled the wool over our eyes”; and, then days later to hear from the ostensible wool-puller that he has had “his eyes really opened.” Whom should one follow into the fray? The wool-puller, or the eye-opener? It is folly to “strike hands” with people like this.

There can surely be a no more pathetic sight than that of preachers flitting around looking for relevance and so attaching themselves to a “somewhat” (Gal 2:6), or that somewhat’s cause or fight. Let your sense of relevance and worth come from thinking for yourself and working hard to build up the congregation where you preach. The Lord, through Jeremiah, invited Judah to go and check out “Shiloh” and see what had become of her (Jer. 7: 12). It would be enlightening—actually depressing—to go and check out the state of some of the churches where these relevance seekers and their power brokers work. I am thinking of a church that played a big role in my life. She was once thriving and vital with over two hundred in attendance; she is now barely a shell of her former self. To hear those responsible for her demise tell it: It has all been for a noble cause: we’ve been fighting for “rats.”

I humbly speak as one who does not have an unblemished record in these matters of relevance and attachment. My moment of clarity came roughly twenty-three [years] ago in the city of Manila. I attached myself to an entourage whose state of some of the churches where these relevance seekers and their power brokers work. I am thinking of a church that played a big role in my life. She was once thriving and vital with over two hundred in attendance; she is now barely a shell of her former self. To hear those responsible for her demise tell it: It has all been for a noble cause: we’ve been fighting for “rats.”

I humbly speak as one who does not have an unblemished record in these matters of relevance and attachment. My moment of clarity came roughly twenty-three [years] ago in the city of Manila. I attached myself to an entourage whose leaders I admired. We went forth to challenge some folks who indeed needed challenging. I challenged them. Right in the middle of a tense, yet civil, meeting of brethren, any sense of civil discourse was destroyed. It came several rows behind where I was sitting. A raucous bellow turned eyes, including mine, back to the source. There was a man—and by extension, his cause—to whom I had attached myself; eyes bulging, face red, and jowls quivering, he was literally yelling at the brother who had the floor. Like I said, it was a moment of clarity. I determined to never be such a groupie again.

Fight for the cause of Truth? Yes. But, you let it be your own study and conviction and not because someone told you to join up. You be sure that you really are, spiritually speaking, “fighting for rights,” and not for “rats.” —AA

(Shaara, Michael (1993), The Killer Angels (New York: Ballantine).

Reluctant Addendum

In connection with the preceding article (Page 14), if I have the cast straight—a roster, I might add, would be helpful—the “eye-opener,” as opposed the “wool-puller,” has taken a less than charitable view of the recent Labourers Together With God lectures, which were held at the Milestone church of Christ. Brother David Brown says, “... the whole Milestone leadership is manifesting the spirit of compromise on several issues” (Contending for the Faith, Feb. ‘07, p. 3; and so, all following quotations). The lectures are an adjunct of the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies, and both are works of the church at Milestone. Since I am teacher in the school, and a member and elder of the church, the comments concern me.

Brother Brown says, “...Milestone and Bellview congregations have had no fellowship for years...” I have been here nearly six years, during which time several Bellview members have several times attended our lectures and meetings. Several Milestone members have likewise attended Bellview functions. Milestone’s preacher, Kenneth Burleson, was asked by a now deceased Bellview elder to speak at his wife’s funeral. At that service, Milestone members were asked to stay and “eat” with Bellview members. What part of this does not bespeak fellowship?

On top of all that, in recent times we received a communication from the Bellview church which, among other things, explicitly says Bellview has never withdrawn fellowship from Ensley {Milestone}. Being an elder at Milestone, I know for a fact that Milestone has never withdrawn from Bellview. Brother Brown, Where’s the beef?

Brother Brown links his erroneous claim of “no fellowship” to “the late Max Miller and friends’ rebellion in 1988 ...” and their having been “withdrawn from.” He calls it “this mess”; I concur. To many brethren, equally as astute and well-intentioned as the gentleman—and certainly closer to the events and facts—the best one could conclude about “the mess” is that many things were done by many people that ought not to have been done.

Brother Brown is not prescient; he knows no more or less about “the mess” than anyone else. He knows what he has been told and he has decided to believe that. He surely knows that it is not as easy as asserting that “So ‘n So has with drawn from Thus ‘n So.” If it were, what then of brother Brown’s predecessor, the late Ira Y. Rice? He was by a church in California charged with specific sins and withdrawn from, and “(no) repentance (was) forthcoming ... “ Perhaps overtaken by “the spirit of compromise,” brother Brown did not himself “withdraw” from brother Rice?

Brother Brown also spearheaded efforts several years ago in defense of the practice of women, as translators taking the floor to address assemblies of the saints. One of brother Brown’s protagonists just recently said that a false teacher becomes a false teacher when he teaches false doctrine. That means that these brethren have been false teachers since—I believe—back in 1994. To this day “no repentance has forthcoming” on brother Brown’s part.
A Review of Fellowship Actions Between the Bellview and Ensley Congregations

INTRODUCTION
This review is to chronologically consider the actions which have been taken by the Bellview and Ensley elderships to restore the fellowship which has been broken between the congregations since 1987. This will include consideration of withdrawal actions, articles in publications, letters between the congregations, and meetings between the elderships of both congregations.

APRIL 1987
In April 1987, some members of the Bellview congregation became unhappy with some of the decisions made by the Bellview elders and held an unauthorized meeting at the Bellview building to discuss their plans. Shortly thereafter some of those individuals left Bellview and began worshiping with the Ensley congregation.

The Bellview elders then received four letters, signed by several of those members who had left, in which it was stated that they were no longer in fellowship with the Bellview elders. Since there is no Scriptural authority to withdraw fellowship from an eldership without withdrawing from the whole congregation, these individuals had withdrawn fellowship from the Bellview congregation.

SEPTEMBER 1987
In September 1987, the Bellview elders, in their Defender publication, published an article entitled “Let The Facts Speak.” As stated in the introductory comments of the article, the elders had considered the misinformation which had been disseminated among the brotherhood to be of such nature as...
not to deserve any comment; however, since so much which is not true about the Bellview Church of Christ, its elders, and some of its members had been spread to so many, they were left with no alternative but to set the record straight and let the facts speak.

**February 1988**

In February 1988, the Bellview elders, in their Defender publication, published an article entitled “The Final Word.” As stated in the article, because of the actions of three individuals to sow discord among brethren against the Bellview congregation, the Bellview Church of Christ no longer extends its fellowship to: Max Miller, Mike Kiser, and Ernest Underwood.

**August 4, 1991**

On August 4, 1991, a letter (See page 12) was sent from the Ensley elders to the Bellview elders. This letter reported a mutual effort by both elderships to attempt to work out the things that have caused the two congregations to have no fellowship with each other.

**August 6, 1991**

On August 6, 1991, a letter (See page 13) was sent from the Bellview elders to the Ensley elders. This letter reported that August 23, 1991, would be an acceptable date for a meeting between the two elderships. It also stated the following “moot” issues which were not to be discussed:

- A. Brothers Miller and Kiser disagreed with us as to some individuals whose names were being considered for elders.
- B. Brother Kiser called the elders “liars” and would not retract his statement. Brother Miller upheld Kiser in this.

Both the above issues are moot items because:

- A. The elders withdrew all consideration of names for elders. This should have settled that matter; however brothers Miller and Kiser refused to drop the matter. We do not wish to discuss that matter further.
- B. We fired brother Kiser because he would not retract his statement that we were liars. We certainly do not plan to rehire him even if he did retract his statement now, so this issue is moot also.

Our basis for the withdrawal of fellowship from brothers Miller, Kiser, and Underwood is clearly set out in the February, 1988 issue of the Defender. It did not relate to the issues above.

**August 11, 1991**

On August 11, 1991, a letter was sent from the Ensley elders to the Bellview elders. It stated that the time and place of meeting by the two elderships was acceptable, but the Ensley elders questioned what would or would not be discussed.

**August 14, 1991**

On August 14, 1991, a letter (See page 14) was sent from the Bellview elders to the Ensley elders. It clarified how the initial contact had been made for a meeting between the two elderships. It restated the agreement of the Bellview elders to the proposed time and meeting place, and again noted the issues that would not be acceptable for discussion.

**August 23, 1991**

On August 23, 1991, a meeting between the two elderships was held at the Pensacola Blvd building to discuss the issues which have caused the two congregations to have no fellowship. During that meeting the Bellview elders outlined two things which must take place for there to be fellowship between the two congregations: (1) They must repudiate and see that the letters of those attending Ensley who wrote to the Bellview elders withdrawing fellowship from them were retracted; and (2) They had to stop using (extending fellowship to) the three men from which Bellview had withdrawn fellowship (Max Miller, Mike Kiser, and Ernest Underwood.) During that meeting the Ensley elders refused to agree to those two requirements.

The Ensley elders insisted that for fellowship to be restored, the Bellview elders would have to agree to meet with them and have a group of unbiased individuals hear and decide the differences between the two elderships. The Bellview elders would not agree to this because to do so would be unscriptural. It would create a decision making body which would have authority over the eldership.

**October 19, 1994**

On October 19, 1994, a letter (See page 15) was sent from the Ensley elders to the Bellview elders. The letter contained an offer that the two elderships meet and try to solve their problems. If this was not possible, they further suggested, “We need to have impartial people to hear and decide as in the matter of a private sin of one against another when the one will not listen.” The letter further proposed how the three suggested individuals would be appointed.

It should be noted that this offer is basically what the Ensley elders had insisted upon in the August 23, 1991, meeting. To have impartial people “hear and decide” what the Bellview elders must do would be unscriptural. It would create a decision making body which would have authority over the eldership.

**October 26, 1994**

On October 26, 1994, a letter (See page 17) was sent from the Bellview elders to the Ensley elders. The letter stated: The Bellview elders have never withdrawn fellowship from the Ensley congregation. Ensley has withdrawn fellowship from Bellview as is evidenced by Bellview’s receipt of four letters from members of the Ensley congregation in 1987 in which they stated their determination to withdraw from the Bellview elders. One of those letters was even received from and signed by one of your present elders. At a meeting with you elders in the fall of 1991, all five of you confirmed your agreement to that withdrawal letter. Therefore, the Ensley elders have withdrawn fellowship from the Bellview elders.

In regard to your present proposal, it should be noted that we, the Bellview elders, already have met with you, the Ensley elders, in the fall of 1991 in an effort to resolve any differences between us.
The meeting was not fruitful. If you elders truly want to improve fellowship between the Bellview and the Ensley congregations, we suggest the following:

1. As an eldership, repudiate and see that the above mentioned letters of withdrawal are retracted.
2. Stop using three preachers, brothers Miller, Kiser, and Underwood, in your meetings and lectureships. The Bellview Church of Christ took appropriate action in applying scriptural discipline to these men in February 1988. The Bellview congregation has not extended fellowship to these men since that time. We encourage the Ensley congregation to recognize this action so the souls of these three men may possibly be saved.

In our meeting with you in the fall of 1991, you refused to agree to the above. If you have changed your mind since that time, please advise us. Otherwise, another meeting with you would not be productive.

**March 8, 1995**

On March 8, 1995, a letter (See page 18) was sent by the Ensley elders to the Bellview elders. Basically, this letter is a repetition that the Ensley elders insisted upon in the meeting on August 23, 1991, and their subsequent letter October 19, 1994, except that this time they have stated that they have contacted the members at Ensley who withdrew fellowship from the Bellview elders in 1987 and the three individuals from which Bellview withdrew fellowship in 1987. They further state, “...all of these have said they would abide by the decision of the three men if Bellview would do the same, even to the repenting of any wrong done by them.”

Please note that this time the Ensley elders are proposing to bring in three faithful men and they expect the Bellview elders to “abide by the decision” of these men. We have stated previously that this is unscriptural and we will not agree to do so.

A statement is made in the last paragraph of the letter in which they threaten to publish our letters to them unless we request that they not be made public.

**March 15, 1995**

On March 15, 1995, a letter was sent by the Bellview elders to the Ensley elders. We stated that if the Ensley elders truly wanted to improve fellowship between the two congregations, they needed to do as we suggested in our letter dated October 26, 1994. Also, we said:

You need to stop trying to circumvent the scriptural discipline that we have taken against brethren Miller, Kiser, and Underwood, as was published in ‘The Final Word’, Defender, February 1988 (copy attached). Instead, use your influence to encourage these three brethren to repent of their sins so that their souls may be saved.

**May 1995**

In May 1995, a publication entitled Labourers Together with God was mailed by the Ensley elders to those on their mailing list. This publication included an article written by one of the Ensley elders which was very critical of the Bellview elders. Without getting approval to do so from the Bellview elders, this publication included copies of the Bellview letters to Ensley. Not only were Bellview’s letters published without approval from the Bellview elders, but one of the letters was not published in its entirety.

**May 12, 2004**

The unresolved fellowship issues which existed in May 1995, still have not been resolved as of the current date. Therefore, there continues to be no fellowship between the Bellview congregation and the Ensley (presently called Milestone) congregations.

**July 2004**

In July 2004, the Bellview elders received letters (See page 20 for one of the letters) from two of the members now attending the Milestone congregation. These individuals were two of the nine individuals who had signed four letters in April 1987, in which it was stated by these individuals that they were no longer in fellowship with the Bellview elders. (See the previous paragraph dated April 1987, in this document for more details.) The two individuals stated in their letters dated July 2004, that they were repenting of writing the letters of disfellowship from the Bellview elders and also stated that they should have left quietly.

**August 2004**

In August 2004, the Bellview elders responded to the letters (See page 21) received from the two Milestone members in July 2004, and said that they were glad to have received their letters. They also stated that they understood their statement of repenting for having written the letters to mean that they were repudiating what they wrote. Also, they understood their statement about leaving quietly to mean that they were repenting of all their actions which were detrimental to the Bellview elders.

It should be noted that the above letter written by these two individuals have little bearing on the fellowship between the Bellview and Milestone congregations because of the following:

1. The Milestone elders have not yet repudiated the four letters which were signed by nine members of the Ensley congregation in April 1987, in which they stated their determination to withdraw from the Bellview elders. The Ensley elders (now Milestone) confirmed their agreement with those withdrawal letters in their meeting with the Bellview elders in the fall of 1991.
2. The Milestone elders have neither acknowledged their error in extending fellowship to brothers Miller, Kizer, and Underwood in the past, nor have they expressed determination not to extend fellowship to brother Kizer and brother Underwood in the future unless these two men repent of...
their actions toward the Bellview congregation.

**AUGUST 25, 2004**

A letter was sent to John Priola with a copy of “A Review of Fellowship Actions Between the Bellview and Ensley Congregations.”

**JANUARY 18, 2006**

A letter sent to Tony Edwards, preacher at Monroeville, Alabama, with a copy of “A Review of Fellowship Actions Between the Bellview and Ensley Congregations.” (See page 22)

—THE ELDERS

Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida

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**Ensley Church of Christ**

57 E. HANNAH CIRCLE
PENSACOLA, FLORIDA 32534-3415
PHONE (904) 476-1417

Kenneth Burleson, Evangelist

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Aug. 4, 1991

Dear Brethren:

As requested by one of your Elders and your minister, per Bro. Middlebrooks, the Ensley Elders are willing to meet with your Elders to attempt to work out the things that have caused the two congregations to have no fellowship with each other. We are requesting that you meet with us at Pensacola Blvd. Church of Christ on Friday, August 16, 1991, at 7:00 p.m. that we may discuss a basis by which all of these differences may be resolved and that there may be unity and peace in the Lord’s Church, as he prayed for.

If we do not hear from you, we will expect to see you at the above named place, time, and date.

In Christian Love,

Ervin Brantley

Don Orr

Homer Thompson

David Wells

W. L. Word

cc. Bro. Middlebrooks
August 6, 1991

Elders
Ensley Church of Christ
57 E. Hannah Circle
Pensacola, FL 32534-3415

Dear brethren:

As per your request that we meet with you at the Pensacola Blvd. Church of Christ building, we regret that we shall not be able to meet on the suggested date of Friday, August 16, due to a conflict; however, we shall be happy to meet with you on the following Friday, August 23, 1991 at 7:00 P.M., if agreeable.

In an attempt to work out the things which you mentioned "have caused the two congregations to have no fellowship with each other," we request you send us a list of those things which you believe need to be discussed.

We consider the following items to be moot; therefore, we do not wish to enter into discussion concerning them.
A. Brothers Miller and Kiser disagreed with us as to some individuals whose names were being considered for elders.
B. Brother Kiser called the elders "liars" and would not retract his statement. Brother Miller upheld Kiser in this.

Both the above issues are moot items because:
A. The elders withdrew all consideration of names for elders. This should have settled that matter; however, brothers Miller and Kiser refused to drop the matter. We do not wish to discuss that matter further.
B. We fired brother Kiser because he would not retract his statement that we were liars. We certainly do not plan to rehire him even if he did retract his statement now, so this issue is moot also.

Our basis for the withdrawal of fellowship from brothers Miller, Kiser, and Underwood is clearly set out in the February, 1988 issue of the Defender. It did not relate to the issues above.

With the above information in mind, the elders at Bellview will look forward to hearing from you as to matters to be discussed and to a discussion with the elders from Ensley.

Sincerely,

Bill Gallaher

Paul Brantley

Haiiston Brantley

Fred Stancliff (now in Singapore)
August 14, 1991

Elders
Ensley Church of Christ
57 E Hannah Circle
Pensacola, FL 32534

Dear brethren:

In response to your letter of August 11, 1991, we restate our desire to see an end of those things which you mentioned "have caused the two congregations to have no fellowship with each other." We are happy to meet and, as you said, "discuss a basis by which all of these differences may be resolved." Subject to the approval of the brethren at Pensacola Blvd., we look forward to meeting with you Friday, August 23, 1991, at 7:00 P.M.

In our previous letter, we did not agree to discuss "all issues that have divided God's people here and elsewhere"; but, rather, were specific in those areas which we shall not discuss. We do not ask that you "attempt to solve these problems by mail," but we do request you send to us or bring to the meeting a list of those items which you wish to discuss listed in the order in which you wish to discuss them.

We do appreciate the request in your letter of August 4, 1991; however, we wish to clarify the statement in the first sentence. Our response has been to an initial contact made through brother Larry Middlebrooks by one of your elders. Brother Hairston Brantley in conversation with brother Middlebrooks stated his earnest desire to see the problems solved as he, and we, would like to see all the problems in the brotherhood solved. Brother Liddell, at the instruction of the elders, relayed a message from the Bellview elders through brother Middlebrooks in which the elders at Bellview responded to a request for a meeting by asking the elders at Ensley to send a letter giving date, time and place of the meeting.

Again, we look forward to meeting with you at the above stated time and place. Should that not be agreeable with the Pensacola Blvd. brethren, we shall be happy to host such a meeting at the Bellview building. We look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Bill Gallaher

Bill Gallaher

Hairston Brantley

Hairston Brantley

Paul Brantley

Fred Stancliff (now in Singapore)
October 19, 1994

Elders,
Bellview Church of Christ
4850 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola, Florida 32526

Brethren:

We have been informed that it is Ensley which does not want the broken fellowship which exists between the two congregations restored. Although there may not have been any formal breaking of fellowship, in actuality, there is no fellowship and Bellview still tries to influence men not to be a part of meetings, lectureships, etc., which are conducted by the Ensley congregation.

We, the Elders of the Ensley congregation, make the following offer to the Elders of the Bellview congregation.

1. That we first meet and have an open and complete discussion of the grievances which each might have, one against the other, and see if the problems can be solved by brotherly love and a desire to do the will of the Lord. (2 John 5; I Pet. 3:8).

* 2. If we cannot, among ourselves, resolve the problems which exists then an excellent example of settling matters is shown in the scriptures. To bring in others that they may hear the matters and then give witness to the truth of the matter and make recommendations for repentance and the restoration of fellowship as the Lord said in John 5:31 "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true." We need to have impartial people to hear and decide as in the matter of a private sin of one against another when the one will not listen. (Matt. 18:15-16). We need to learn to forgive. (Matt. 18:21-35).
Contending for the Faith—June/2007

DISCUSSION GROUP

ContendingFTF, hosted at Yahoo.com, is a discussion group for members of the church of Christ only. Biblical doctrine, & church issues are discussed; truth is defended & error refuted.

To Subscribe to ContendingFTF send email to:
ContendingFTFsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

“For those who love the truth and hate error.”

Continued Page 2
October 16, 1994
Elders,
Bellview Church of Christ

Brethren, we, the Ensley Elders, sincerely would like to have all matters which now divide us cleared up and forgotten so we could again have the fellowship between us which God demands. The only way to resolve those matters is to walk in the truth of what happened and then those who need to repent do so. (I John 1:7).

May we hear from you at an early date concerning this proposal, for we are not given assurance of the morrow. (James 4:14).

* If this proposal is used then you will select one, Ensley will select one, and there will be one appointed which is acceptable to both sides.

Elders, Ensley Church of Christ

Ervin R. Brantley
Donald R. Orr

Homer W. Thompson
William D. Wells

William L. Word

Elders/dh
Certified No. Z 270 023 017 - RRR
Elders,
Ensley Church of Christ
57 E. Hannah Circle
Pensacola, FL 32534-3415

Brethren:

We received your certified letter dated October 19, 1994 and were glad to see that you, as well as we, are interested in the improvement of fellowship between the Bellview and Ensley congregations.

The Bellview elders have never withdrawn fellowship from the Ensley congregation. Ensley has withdrawn fellowship from Bellview as is evidenced by Bellview's receipt of four letters from members of the Ensley congregation in 1987 in which they stated their determination to withdraw from the Bellview elders. One of those letters was even received from and signed by one of your present elders. At a meeting with you elders in the fall of 1991, all five of you confirmed your agreement to that withdrawal letter. Therefore, the Ensley elders have withdrawn fellowship from the Bellview elders.

In regard to your present proposal, it should be noted that we, the Bellview elders, already have met with you, the Ensley elders, in the fall of 1991 in an effort to resolve any differences between us. The meeting was not fruitful. If you elders truly want to improve fellowship between the Bellview and the Ensley congregations, we suggest the following:

1. As an eldership, repudiate and see that the above mentioned letters of withdrawal are retracted.

2. Stop using three preachers, brothers Miller, Kiser, and Underwood, in your meetings and lectureships. The Bellview Church of Christ took appropriate action in applying scriptural discipline to these men in February 1988. The Bellview congregation has not extended fellowship to these men since that time. We encourage the Ensley congregation to recognize this action so the souls of these three men may possibly be saved.

In our meeting with you in the fall of 1991, you refused to agree to the above. If you have changed your mind since that time, please advise us. Otherwise, another meeting with you would not be productive.

Sincerely,

Hairston Brantley, elder
Bill Gallaher, elder

Paul Brantley, elder
Fred Stancliff, elder

Certified No. Z 270 026 452 - RRR
March 8, 1995

Elders,
Bellview Church of Christ
4850 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola, Florida 32526

Dear Brethren,

Under date of October 19, 1994 we wrote you a certified letter suggesting that (1) we meet to try and resolve the differences which exist between Bellview and Ensley, or (2) that we bring in some brethren who were not familiar with the matters and who were sound in the faith and who were not prejudiced concerning the matters and let them hear the facts and then make recommendations as to how the matter can be settled and fellowship be restored between us.

Under date of October 26, 1994 Ensley received a certified letter from Bellview stating that they had met with the Ensley Elders previously and the said meeting was not fruitful; therefore, we understand by said letter that you do not want to meet again. You did not even mention option two. We know that Brother Rice said it would be stupid to do so. We wonder what Bellview has to hide by refusing to have good faithful men who have not had their minds poisoned by the articles and telephone calls by you elders to come in and hear the matter and to help resolve the differences. Ensley is willing to do this and we pray that you will also accept this proposal. We know that Bellview has practiced this procedure before.

Also in your October 26, 1994 letter you attempt to create a smoke-screen by saying the Bellview Church of Christ took appropriate action in applying scriptural discipline to brothers Miller, Kiser and Underwood in February 1988. If reading about your withdrawal of fellowship in the "Defender" or one of your publications and never trying to get the men to repent is scriptural discipline then you practiced it. But long before you
Continued page 2
March 8, 1995
Elders,
Bellview Church of Christ

did your so-called scriptural discipline you had done all in your power to try to deny Brother Miller and Riser a place to preach after you fired them. If discipline was to be practiced on these brethren the proper time would have been while they were still at Bellview. You elders have called several preachers who have been invited to preach meetings or speak on lectureships at Ensley and tried to persuade them not to come. You told one of our invited speakers that he would be removed from the editorial staff of "Contending For The Faith" if he would speak on our lectureship. He told you to remove his name. You also cut off the support of one of the missionaries in Taiwan who would not bow to your demands for a blind faith in the Bellview Elders. You also used your influence to have others drop their support to the same missionary and you boast about your missionary efforts. You also say you have never disfellowshipped Ensley. If you mean you have never sent a formal letter of withdrawal of fellowship then you are correct, but fellowship does not now exist between the two congregations.

We want Bellview and the church as a whole to know we want this matter settled, but not at the price of truth. We again ask the Bellview Elders to re-consider their rejection of a plan to bring peace to the two congregations and also the church as a whole.

We have contacted the three men mentioned in your letter and also the members at Ensley who withdrew fellowship from the Bellview Elders and all have said they would abide by a decision of three faithful men who were not prejudiced in the matter and would abide by the decision of the three men if Bellview would do the same, even to repenting of any wrong done by them. This matter can be resolved if you are really interested in resolving the matter.

If you choose not to have the matter completed in a satisfactory manner as listed in our letters or by a suggestion from you as to
Continued page 3
March 8, 1995
Elders
Bellview Church of Christ

how to resolve them then we intend to publish the letters so the
brotherhood may know that we have tried at Ensley to restore
fellowship. We intend to publish your letters unless you request
that they not be made public. We also grant you the privilege of
publishing the letters if done in the entirety.

For the cause of Christ,

Ensley Elders

Ervin Brantley
Donald Orr
Homer Thompson
William D. Wells
William L. Word

Elders/dh
Certified # Z 362 208 375

Ervin Brantley
7332 Dahlia Drive
Pensacola, FL 32526

July 25, 2004
Elders of Bellview Church of Christ
4850 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola, FL 32526

Dear Brethren:

I am sorry that I wrote the letter of disfellowship from the elders (Hairston
Brantley, Bill Gallagher, and Fred Stancliff) of the Bellview Church of Christ. I
therefore, repent of having done so. I should have left quietly, when asked by one of you
elders, as others did.

In Christian Love,

Ervin Brantley
August 1, 2004

Ervin Brantley
7332 Dahlia Drive
Pensacola, FL 32526

Dear bro Brantley:

We were glad to receive your letter dated July 25, 2004 in which you stated that you repented of having written a letter of disfellowship from the elders of the Bellview church of Christ (Hairston Brantley, Bill Gallaher, and Fred Stancilff). When you state that you repented of having written the letter, we understand this to mean that you desire to repudiate what you wrote in the letter. Likewise, when you state, “I should have left quietly,” we understand this to mean that you are also repenting of having written various letters, articles in publications, statements, and all other actions that were detrimental to the Bellview elders. Based upon this understanding, we now encourage you as an individual to use your influence to encourage the other individuals who wrote letters of disfellowship from the elders of the Bellview church of Christ to repent of their actions as we understand that you have done.

If we are correct in our understanding of your intended repentance, we stand ready to let those throughout the world know of your desired correction of your past actions.

At this time you are in a unique position as one of the Milestone elders. You will recall that in a letter to the elders of the Ensley Church of Christ dated October 26, 1994, reference was made to a meeting of the Bellview elders and the Ensley elders in the fall of 1991, in which each of the Ensley elders was asked individually and collectively if they upheld the letters of withdrawal of fellowship which their members had written to the Bellview elders. Each one of the Ensley elders individually and as the eldership for the Ensley congregation indicated that they upheld the letters of withdrawal from the Bellview elders. Now, to improve fellowship between the Bellview and Milestone congregations, we encourage you to use your influence to encourage your fellow elders at Milestone to do as we suggested in our letter to the elders of the Ensley Church of Christ on October 26, 1994:

“1. As an eldership, repudiate and see that the above mentioned letters of withdrawal are retracted.

A Friendly Church With A Vital Message
2. Stop using three preachers, brothers Miller, Kiser, and Underwood, in your meetings and lectureships. The Bellview Church of Christ took appropriate action in applying scriptural discipline to these men in February 1988. The Bellview congregation has not extended fellowship to these men since that time. We encourage the Enley congregation to recognize this action so the souls of these three men may possibly be saved.” Since brother Miller has died since the date of the above letter, we believe that it would now be appropriate for the Milestone eldership to acknowledge its error in extending fellowship to these three men in the past, and to express its determination not to extend fellowship to brother Kiser or brother Underwood in the future unless they repent of their actions toward the Bellview congregation.

Sincerely,

Paul Brantley, elder  Bill Gallaher, elder  Fred Stancliff, elder

Bellview Church of Christ
4850 Sauffey Field Road; Pensacola, Florida 32526-1798
(850) 455-7595
Web Page: http://www.bellviewcoc.com
E-mail: bellviewcoc@gmail.com

January 18, 2006

Elders
Church of Christ at Milestone
4051 Stefani Rd.
Cantonment, Florida 32533-2911

Brethren:

In recent correspondence with brother Tony Edwards of Monroeville, Alabama, he asked us, the Bellview elders, to make one more attempt to restore fellowship with you, the Milestone elders. In making this attempt, he further asked that we define what actions it would take to restore the desired fellowship. Although we have enumerated in previous correspondence with you several times in the past, what it would take to restore fellowship between the two congregations, we told him that we would make one more attempt to do so.

Attached to this letter is a copy of “A Review Of Fellowship Actions Between The Bellview And Ensley Congregations”. As noted in the August 2004 entry to the attached document, in order for full fellowship to be restored it will be necessary for the Milestone elders to take the following actions:

1. The Milestone elders have not yet repudiated the four letters which were signed by nine members of the Ensley congregation in April 1987 in which they stated their determination to withdraw from the Bellview elders. The Ensley elders (now Milestone) verbally confirmed their agreement with those withdrawal letters in their meeting with the Bellview elders in the fall of 1991.

2. The Milestone elders have neither acknowledged their error in extending fellowship to brothers Miller, Kizer, and Underwood in the past, nor have they expressed determination not to extend fellowship to brother Kizer and brother Underwood in the future unless these two men repent of their actions toward the Bellview congregation.

Sincerely,

Paul Brantley, elder  Bill Gallaher, elder  Fred Stancliff, elder
Churches of Christ
Every where.

Dear Brethren:

The church of Christ of Downtown San Francisco, is commanded by Christ, to "mark", "turn away" from, "avoid", "reject", and "have no fellowship", with brother Kaan Y. Chin. This we are doing in accordance with Rom. 16:17; II Tim. 3:5; Tit. 3:10; Eph. 3:11; And II Thes. 3:3,14.

Over a period of one year, we have been to brother Chin trying to get him to see the errors of his way and correct them. He refuses to hear good brethren here any more, though they have acted in a spirit of gentleness.

Brother Chin has sinned in that he has:---
1. Become "factious", being filled with "strife, jealousy and wrath", shown to be wrong in the following: Tit. 3:10; II Pet. 2:10; II Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; and James 3:14-18.
2. Become "disobedient" and "reprobate" to the good works of the Downtown church of Christ. (cf. Tit. 1:16.)
3. Caused division in the church, leading away disciples after him. (cf. Rom. 16:17 and Acts 20:30.)

This faction, (Or "schism", I Cor. 11: 18 or 12:25), which brother Chin leads, meets at 1529 Mission St., and calls itself "The East-west church of Christ." It is only about 4 blocks from our building. This rebellious movement was aided in its formation and continuance by Ira Y. Rice, Jr., the Bethel church of Christ, Athens, Alabama, and Charles Ben der.

Therefore, we will have no further fellowship with brother Chin; and we urge brethren in Christ to do the same until he has repented of and confessed the sins named above and dissolved the faction according to the Scriptures. At that time we can pray that God will forgive.

In the Name of Christ,

[Signatures]

[Signatures]
Contending For The Faith
P.O. Box 2357
Spring, Texas 77383